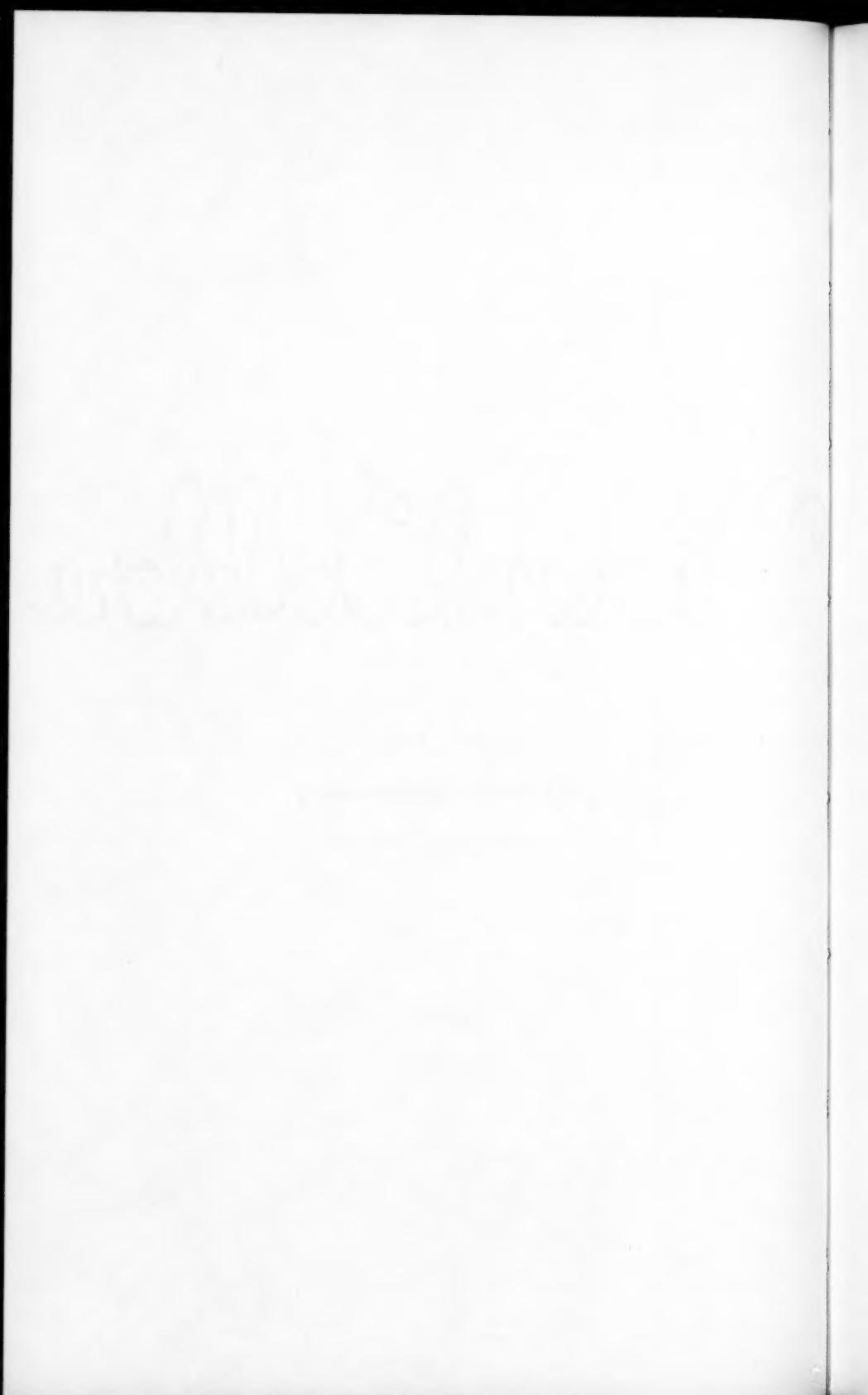


# Midwest Folklore

SPRING, 1961

Published by  
*Indiana University*  
Bloomington, Indiana

Vol. XI, No. 1



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# *Midwest Folklore*

**Editor:** Professor W. Edson Richmond, Department of English,  
Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

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JAN HAROLD BRUNVAND  
*Indiana University*  
*Bloomington, Indiana*

## AN INDIANA STORYTELLER REVISITED

**J**IM PENNINGTON, of Bloomington, Indiana, is easily one of the three best storytellers I have ever recorded"; so wrote Herbert Halpert in August, 1942, in *Hoosier Folklore Bulletin*.<sup>1</sup> Halpert described his discovery of forty-four year old Pennington, "the lessee of a flourishing gas station on the southeast corner of the Indiana University campus," and printed seventeen texts of his folktales along with some of the storyteller's comments about them. Nine of the tales which he wrote down were "windies" or tall stories, and the rest were humorous anecdotes and belief tales, save for one almost tragic account of a man dogged by hard luck. "Despite the fact that dictation slows up a storyteller's rhythm and usually loses much of the quality of the tales," Halpert noted, "these stories are extraordinarily well told."

Recently, my curiosity aroused about the whereabouts of this local raconteur, I leafed through Bloomington's current telephone directory; I was gratified to find that a "Pennington & Son Service Station" was listed. It is no longer adjacent to the campus but out on the southwest side of town on a state highway route. In August, 1959, just seventeen years after some of Jim Pennington's tales were originally published in *Hoosier Folklore Bulletin*, I met their source; I found Jim Pennington still to be a fine storyteller and a willing informant. During two evening story sessions, I wrote down twenty-four of his tales, four of which parallel ones published by Halpert. This revisiting makes possible comparisons of variation in a gifted informant's narrative style over a longer period of time than it is usually possible for a field collector to span. Furthermore, Jim Pennington's latest comments on stories and storytelling are interesting to compare with his similar remarks to Halpert in 1941 and 1942. Both his texts and his attitudes, it will be seen, have remained fairly stable. Space permits printing only samples of the new texts, but following are descriptions of my two recent visits to Jim Pennington and seven full versions of stories which I heard from him.

#### THE FIRST VISIT—AUGUST 9, 1959

The man who filled my gas tank when I pulled into Pennington & Son's station on August 8 was Jim's son, and he assented that it was his father who had once told some stories to a fellow from the university. He still told stories and if I wanted to hear them (shaking his head at this idea), then I should come tomorrow evening when his father was to be on duty. Accompanied by Guthrie T. Meade, a fellow folklore graduate student at Indiana University, I drove in the next evening at about 8:00 and asked the young man on the pumps if Mr. Pennington were in and if he might feel like telling stories to us. "Old man Pennington tells lots of stories," we were told; "it even gets a little tiresome sometimes—come on and sit down." When Jim came out and sat in his chair in front of the station, where he could keep an eye on the pump islands while enjoying the cool evening air, we introduced ourselves, presented him a copy of the *Hoosier Folklore Bulletin* article and asked if he would feel like telling us some stories like these, since we were studying such things. Jim said that a girl had come in once before to ask him for stories, but he had just told her he didn't tell them any more; since we wanted to hear stories so badly, he would try to tell a few. For the next two hours, until the station closed, we sat on the curbstone at Jim Pennington's feet and listened to him tell tale

after tale, pausing only when more than one customer drove in at a time and then not skipping a word as he resumed the narrative. I took down outlines of the stories and some of the typical phrasing used; I wrote as rapidly as possible, but without interrupting stories or asking for a slower delivery. The full texts were typewritten at home immediately after collecting them with reference both to my notes and to my own and Meade's memories.

The first tale Jim Pennington told us, "The Boy Who Was a Dreamer" (given below) is an expanded version of Halpert's eighth text, "Toothpick Timber."<sup>2</sup> The general plot of the story has not changed, but the hero's temperament and his career are described in much greater detail. Yet, some basic points have been retained verbatim in the longer version—the noise that startles the boy, the fact that it was a twelve-room house that was made out of the wood, and the cornerstones remaining after the timber shrank back to normal size.

Jim had emphasized to Halpert that he preferred funny stories and exaggerations to stories about the supernatural; yet he told Halpert some belief tales. We had exactly the same experience in our session. The second story we heard was a fine version of "The Ghostly Hitchhiker," a typical comment of Jim's followed the telling (see the text below).

The third story was the familiar windy about bizarre crossbreeding of insects. On my second visit to Jim Pennington he told me a longer version of the same tale, and both texts are quoted below.

Next Jim told us the tall story about a huge boulder dislodged into a valley which rolled up and down until it was the size of a golf ball.<sup>3</sup> At this point I asked Jim whether he would allow me to make a tape-recording sometime of him telling stories. He answered negatively, saying that Halpert had also asked him to record—"to come over to the university for a voice test"—but he had never consented to it. By way of explanation, Jim told us about once when he was driving home from work with his wife in the car. They had their radio on. "Then, suddenly, I heard my name spoken on the radio. It was that Halpert, and he was saying 'I was in at Jim Pennington's gas station today and Jim told me a story. Now I want to tell it to you just like Jim told me.' My old lady almost kicked the dash out of the car, she was so mad." Although Jim remained willing to let me copy down stories, he never agreed to let me record his voice.

Jim next told us about a squirrel-hunting incident and then told a risqué' joke about a man mistaking a ram for a ewe.<sup>4</sup> He related

an anecdote about smart sheep dogs, and then, abruptly, the conversation came back to the supernatural. Jim asked, "Do either of you boys believe in haunts? If you have ever had a close friend or relative, girl friend or whatever, die in an accident, die violently. If you then saw that person come up to you, when you're riding in a car, horse, a bicycle, or whatever you ride—you wouldn't tell anyone, would you? Well, a man told me this and he heard it from a man who never told but him." Then Jim told us a tale about a return from the dead (Motif E332.3.1. *Ghost rides on horseback*). But he cautioned me, "Now don't write that down; don't write it. That was in confidence." He added thoughtfully, "I suppose a man could have such a thing on his mind and believe he saw it." The story reminded him of another one about a death omen (Motif D1812.5.1.12. *Animal behavior as bad omen*. Here a bird at a window.)

To close the session on a humorous note, Jim told another risqué and very funny story he called "The Three Sorority Sisters' Reunion" (bragging about the long penis of the husband). Before leaving, I asked Jim about two folktale Types which Halpert had heard—1920 B, "too busy to tell a lie," and 1960 D and F, the large vegetable and kettle. Jim replied, in part, "I knew that man and it really happened. This is the truth. Everyone called him 'Windy,' but I called him 'Stormy.' [The first tale was told.] I also know the story about two men had a contest to see who was the best liar. One said he had seen a very large pumpkin and the other was a kettle maker; he made the kettle to cook it in."

#### THE SECOND VISIT—SEPTEMBER 16, 1959

After missing Jim's night on duty on several occasions and once finding him too busy to tell stories, I finally arranged a collecting session again on the evening of September 16. I had brought a tape recorder along, but still Jim refused to allow me to set it up, and reluctantly I got out my notebook. Despite there being more business this night than during our first meeting, I collected another dozen of his extremely well-told stories.

I asked first whether Jim remembered hearing any Paul Bunyan stories from his days as a Wisconsin lumberjack. "Oh yes," he was sure he had—but he couldn't remember any of them now.<sup>5</sup> Instead Jim started out with a different genre—a Negro story (given below). Later in the evening he told another tale about Negroes, this one somewhat off-color. Next I heard the longer version of the cross-breeding tale. The third story was the familiar windy about a quick-

freeze catching the frogs in the pond (Motif X1130.3.), and the fourth tale was a bear escape story (Motif X1133.32.).

Once again the talk turned to ghost stories. Jim repeated that he always disliked telling or hearing stories about supernatural things. He said that storytelling in general had long since been declining. "In fact," he said, "I quit fooling with stories about '44, and without the general store, blacksmith shop and other places like that, people don't tell stories now like they used to." Once, Jim told me, his memory for stories had been prodigious; he used to be able to leave church and remember every word of the sermon.<sup>6</sup> Recently, he said, he believes that he caught the minister in a misquotation. He had been giving a Bible passage concerning a rich man in Hell and he used the word "flame"—"Now I don't believe you'll find the word 'flame' used anywhere in the Bible," Jim said.

Jim went on to tell the well known hoopsnake story (Motif X1321.3.1.) and he said about it, "Old Jim Chestnut used to tell that one. He's been dead a long time. Lived over in Brown County . . . this boy being chased by the hoopsnake, seems like he jumped behind a tree to escape the poison from the horn. I can't tell it right." Another windy about smart hogs followed, and then, in answer to my question, "Do you know any fish stories?" Jim said, "Well, I know why a guy *quit* fishing; everytime he caught a fish the stream dropped two feet."<sup>7</sup>

Jim told me a shaggy dog story which he said he had learned from Jim Smalley from the University. Jim didn't care especially for the shaggy dog kind of humor, however, and he remarked, "Now that's not much of a story—not nearly so good as this one . . ." He gave me an off-color tale and then chuckled, "Now there's one you can't put in your textbook!"

The last story I heard from Jim Pennington was to me the masterpiece of his repertoire. It is given below as nearly as I can reproduce it. Jim said that he was telling it for the first time, but it seemed to have a fine polish imparted by many retellings. In its general style it is comparable to the tale about the boomer's hard luck told to Halpert, but in this case the sad-sounding story is only a ruse leading up to a funny ending. The long, pathetic building-up of the plot was done slowly, deliberately and with much feeling. The shift to first-person narration when Charley began his confession was perfectly suited to the melancholy tone, and Jim took full advantage of the chance to imitate the voice of the weary old wanderer describing the great religious experience of his life. The comic exaggera-

tion coming at the ending was so well concealed that I had no suspicion that I was being hoodwinked until the last instant when the trap was sprung. Jim's story is a stellar example of the best kind of modern oral artistry, but this art can only be suggested on the printed page.

#### TEXTS

##### THE BOY WHO WAS A DREAMER

*There was a boy who was just a dreamer. He wouldn't work at all on the farm; finally his father run him out. He wandered off into the woods and kept getting hungrier and hungrier. Finally he got to a farm and asked them for some food, but they didn't have a thing and only gave him a glass of water and a toothpick. So he decided that maybe he would have to work after all, and he asked the way to a town. "Just go over there over Green Briar Ridge," they told him, "and you'll get to town." So he set off into the woods over the ridge and all the time chewing on the toothpick. He was so hungry by then that he just kept listening for any little sound and jumpin' at every sound looking for food. He thought it might be a bird or something he could eat.*

*He heard a noise and jumped at it. But it was a rattlesnake and it struck at him, but it hit the toothpick. Well this just frightened him so that he fainted, and when he came to, he saw that the toothpick had begun to swell and was as big as a pole. He forgot all about food then, just picked some berries, and stayed there watching it swell until it was as large as a telephone pole. It kept right on swelling.*

*At last he left and went off until he came to a sheepherder's cabin and he got fed at last. After eating he told them about the swelling toothpick and they all went out to look at it. By then it was huge, about 100 feet across, smooth good wood and not a mark on it.*

*Well, he married the daughter of that sheepherder and they cut up the wood and made a twelve room house out of it. With the wood left over, they made a bunch of furniture. They sold the wood they had left and got fairly well-to-do. So he decided to paint his house, now that he had some money. Well, that was his mistake.*

*He went to town and brought back about three barrel of paint and he did paint that house. But the next morning when he woke up, there was nothing left of his house around his bed but the cornerstones. The alcohol and the turpentine in that paint killed the poison in that wood.*

*Now that was a damn big lie, think.*

##### THE GHOSTLY HITCHHIKER

*I think this was the very first story I ever told to Halpert. An old man drove in one night and told it to me. I went in and told it to Halpert and he got all excited and wanted to meet the man who told it. I had never seen him before and he drove away.*

There was a man and his wife who wanted a child pretty bad. But they never had one for a long time; they weren't that fortunate. Finally they did have a child. They had never owned a car neither, but when the child was about four or five years old, they decided that they'd go and see her—the wife's—sister and show her their child.

They went on a night about like this [referring to the night when the story was told to him]. It was cool and wet, in the fall, some of the leaves were falling from the trees and a little rain was coming down. They drove along until they noticed woman standing alongside the road. She had on a black tight-fitting dress and no wrap whatever. She had a cold, she said, so they would have to take the child up front.

She wasn't much of a talker, but they did finally find out her name and where she was from; it was in the same town they were going to. Well, they came into the city, around 8:00, and stopped at a service station to ask directions. They asked the way to the brother-in-law's home and the service station man, lived there a number of years, not only knew the way, but also the man. Knew him well. And he told them how to get there.

So he thought he'd go back and see if he could let off the woman somewhere. But when he looked back into the back seat, there was no one there. Well, that disturbed him a little, and he asked the service station attendant if he had seen a woman in a black dress get out. "No," he said, "there never was anybody else in your car when you drove in. The man and his wife were quite bothered by this and the attendant thought maybe they were sick. He offered to take them on himself, but they said they were all right and drove themselves.

Got to his brother-in-law's and meeting them and all, eating, they almost forgot about it all. But, after supper, they mentioned the woman who had ridden with them and mentioned her name. No, they had never heard of her, but they began to get curious again and they decided to drive out to the address.

It was way out outside of town, down on a dark and deserted street. But they did at last find a little cottage at that address and they pounded on the door. They got no answer for a long time, but it finally opened.

"What's wantin' here this time of night," an old woman said. They said they had picked up a girl by such-and-such a name and she had given this address, so they just wondered if she had got home all right. "She's been dead for forty years," the old woman said. [Short break to wait on a customer.]

Well, after that, the next morning, they decided to try to check up. They heard it was old Granny so-and-so and she would be likely to tell things like that, you know.

The old man told me that, had tears running down his cheeks. He was the man in the story—the driver of the car. He might have been drinking something stronger than coke (which we were then drinking), don't you think? [JB: Did she leave anything in the car?] Yes, water spots, in the back seat. There were water spots in the shape of some old-fashioned shoes in the car.

Out in Norwalk, California, at Knott's Berry Farm, I met an old fellow who could really tell ghost stories. I don't like them kind myself—I prefer stories that are impossibilities.

## CROSSING BEES WITH LIGHTNING BUGS

## Version 1:

During the war when I was working up in Indianapolis, there was a fellow who used to sell watermelons. He would go out and buy a whole field of melons and take them to the plant and line them up, maybe fifty in a row. And he would lay a ten-dollar bill on each one. People would come along and see those ten-dollar bills and ask what they were for. He said, "The melon's are a dollar each, but if you find a green one, you get the ten-dollars."

I told him this story. I said I had been in the honey business and I had crossed bees with lightning bugs so they could work at night. That worked all right, but some of those renegade bees got mixed up with some tumble bugs, and the honey got so it tasted just like shit.

He thought about that a while; then he said to me, "You take that honey down to Louisville. They'll buy anything down there."

## Version 2:

You know there was an old German fellow up in Indianapolis and he made himself a fortune by selling anything. He could just sell anything anywhere. He would go out and buy a whole field of something—the whole lot of it—and then find a place to sell it. For example, he would maybe go down to Georgia—I think that's where they grow them—and buy a whole farm of pecans. And then he would sell them all. Now one time he bought a whole field of watermelons. He saw this field and he went up to the farmer and asked, "How much for the lot? I'll buy every God Damned one." Well, there weren't many that year; he bought them and took them back to Indianapolis. Then he went to the bank and got a lot of money changed to ten-dollar bills, and some thumbtacks, and he put those melons out in a line in front of the old Eli Lilly plant—only it wasn't that then—and he stuck a ten-dollar bill on each one. I don't mean he covered them all with the bills, but he placed a bill on every one in the front row and he had some others set out by other plants around town. Now people would buy those melons and bust them apart right there because he said that ten was for the man who got a green one. And he wanted them to find a green one. So I told him this story.

There was a fellow that was just a dreamer. He got into the desert and he saw that this could be a very good farm if only he could do it right. So he got a lot of potatoes and onions and he planted himself a farm. You see he was careful to put a potato eye into each hill and some onion. Well, those onions made the eyes water and the potatoes were well watered and grew.

He raised just a whopping patch of potatoes that way. Then he began to notice all the bugs and bees that were hanging around so he decided he might as well get into the honey business too. So there he was in the potato and honey business and doing all right. But, as I said a while ago, he was just a dreamer.

He decided to cross those bees with lightning bugs, you see, so they could work all night. Well, you know, there is always a bunch of rascals and mavericks in any bunch and there was some in those bees too. Because the rascals of those bees got out and mixed with the tumble bugs and all their honey started smelling like shit.

So this fellow says to me, said, "Now I know you can sell that honey. You take it to Louisville. They'll buy anything there."

*After a while he realized I'd been lying and he said, "You're the lyingest son of a bitch I've ever seen. In the first place those bees would never have crossed with lightning bugs and they never would have had anything to do with tumble bugs either."*

### TOO BUSY TO TELL A LIE

*. . . He rode into town one day and his horse was all in a lather. "Tell us your best," they said to him. Tell us your best one, Windy."*

*"Now boys, I can't," he said. "Old man so-and-so just died."*

*So they all went out there and the woman was home tearing up carpet rags. Said the man was out harvesting. So he was too busy to lie; what would he tell if he told a good one?*

### THE NIGGER THAT WANTED TO VOTE

*Did you ever hear about the Nigger down in Arkansas that wanted to vote?*

*Well, this Nigger came in to vote. And, they've got a governor down there, you know, who's kind of hard on them. So he said that he would have to pass three tests before he would be allowed to vote.*

*Said, "Now the first test is to show your high school diploma. Do you have that?" "Oh yes," says the Nigger, "Here it is."*

*"OK," said, "now the second test is to show your college diploma. Got that with you?" "Oh yes. My old lady said I might need that too, so here it is."*

*"Now," the governor says, "here is the third test. You have to read from this newspaper." And he give him a Chinese newspaper.*

*Old Rastus took it and looked at it. Squinted at it and turned it around a bit. "Come on," says the governor, "what do you see there?"*

*"Well," says old Rastus. Said, "Well, let's see now. I see here—uh—I see—well—I see in this here Chinese newspaper that not many Niggers gonna vote in Arkansas this year!"*

### HOW CHARLEY WAS CONVERTED

*Now I'm going to tell you a story that is a pretty good one. I've never told this one before. (JB: Where did you learn it?) Oh, I couldn't say—I just don't know. But it is pretty good story.*

*There were two boys who were always the best of friends throughout their lives but they were just as different as they could be. One we'll call Bill and the other Charley. Now Bill was a church-goer and followed the teachings of the church. He always tried to do good, you know. Charley was just the opposite. He would play any kind of dirty trick and mean trick on any one. But still they was the best of friends through their schooling. After school they decided to go west to open a ranch together.*

*Charley just got ornerier and ornerier all the time and finally Bill told him, said, "Charley, you'll have to get out. You will have to leave until you change your ways, 'cause I can't stand it any longer."*

*So Charley left and the years passed into middle age and manhood, and finally they was both old men. Bill prospered, but he always wondered*

what had happened to Charley. Well, finally, one Thanksgiving Bill seen a fellow that looked awful familiar. He was old and bent, wrinkled and almost blind. He went up to him, put out his hand, and said, "What's your name?" And, sure enough, it was his old pal Charley again. Well, he was in bad shape morally and physically, you know, and so he said, "I'm going to take you home with me Charley, and I'll give you a clean bath—a good bath—and clean clothes, and some food." So he did that and Charley mumbled a little under his breath all the way home, but they got there all right and he got him cleaned up and fed. They was just sitting around the fireside and Bill says to Charley, "Do you wish to tell me about it?"

"Well," Charley says, "I'm a broken man. In worldly goods I'm one of the richest in the world, but I'm broke inside. I'm hunting up every man I ever wronged and I'm beggin' his pardon. I'm getting down on my knees and begging him."

"Charley," says Bill, "What done it?"

"Well," says Charley. Said, "I got my wealth; I went west and I had a ranch—waterholes, fertile valleys and cattle you couldn't count. I owned a whole county and everybody hated me. Then there came a drought and the neighbors and the cattle and the children was all dying, but I wouldn't help any of them. The people over in the next county were awful religious and they decided to pray for rain. So on the morning when they had planned their barbecue and the prayers for rain, I rode out to inspect my fences as I always did and I looked over and saw them all gathering there to pray. Now I seen a small black cloud coming up and I thought to myself, 'Now it might rain a bit after all.' So I got up under a tree to watch those fools make bigger fools of themselves. Now on that day I seen the power of the Lord; I witnessed the power of prayer myself. That cloud moved over and it centered right over that county, and I seen the power of prayer to bring rain from it.

"Now, as you know, I always carry a double-barreled shotgun with me, and I had leaned that gun up against the fence. Now when I seen what was happening, a cold hand gripped my heart. It began to rain on those people; and they held their hands up in the air and it just rained down hard on them. But not one drop of water fell on my side and I was under that tree just as dry as I could be. Now when I picked up that shotgun, it had rained so that one barrel was plumb full of water and the other was bone dry! And that's what converted me."

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> "Indiana Storyteller," Vol. 1, No. 2 (August, 1942), 43-61.

<sup>2</sup> Printed on page 8 of the *HFB* article.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Chase gives a similar story about a log in *American Folk Tales and Songs* (New York: Signet, 1956), 98-100.

<sup>4</sup> In 1941 Jim had told Halpert (see page 41) that he disliked dirty stories, but still told lots of them to the people who would come in to hear them. He told me four such stories, but said nothing about his opinion of them.

<sup>5</sup> But note his subsequent claims for a very good memory.

<sup>6</sup> Jim's earlier comments on the decline of folktales and on his own good memory were given on pages 43-45 of the *HFB* article.

<sup>7</sup> See the story to which this remark alludes in *HFB*, pages 47-48.

DONALD M. WINKELMAN  
Indiana University  
Bloomington, Indiana

## THE BROWN COUNTY PROJECT

DURING THE SUMMER OF 1960, the Folklore Program of Indiana University organized the Brown County Project, an enterprise designed to collect in depth the songs, stories, and traditions of this well known scenic area. While cooperative field trips have been known to European folklorists, the collectors in the United States have operated singly. In this way, the project was an unusual folklore experiment.

Collection in depth is not new. Vance Randolph has compiled Ozark lore exclusively; on a more limited scale, Hyatt's *Folk-lore of Adams County, Illinois*<sup>1</sup> was one of the first published compendia and contained over ten thousand individual items dealing with weather, planting, animal signs, and so forth, from this single county; Emelyn Gardner, author of *Folklore of the Schoharie Hills*<sup>2</sup> is another example of the folklorist who tried to work a given area completely. The difference between these collections and the Brown County Project is that this was a team project and the first extensive field-work done entirely with tape recorders.

Close cooperation took place within the group, and as one vein of inquiry proved fruitful, the results were passed on to the others. This intercommunication provided the members of the project with concrete leads which enabled them actively to seek out *genres* which were generally known, as well as providing a basis for further inquiry. The knowledge of what had been found sometimes provided the "door opener" to other informants by allaying suspicion and permitting the field worker to be treated somewhat more as a member of the group.

The members of the project began by searching for various people in Bloomington who might serve as leads to Brown County informants and by contacting the Nashville, Indiana, newspaper. In this way

we received a cordial invitation to attend a meeting of the Brown County Historical Society and an invitation to join the group. The assistance which we received and are still receiving from this group was invaluable, since the members served as informants and provided a general introduction to the area. With the help of this organization, as well as with the help of the informants whom we located through other means, our work was soon well on its way.

In order to avoid confusing the informants and so as to have a record for future reference, a Brown County informant file was set up with as much information as possible given by the collector. Thus, before visiting an informant, one could check the file to determine whether the individual had already been interviewed. Or, in some cases, an informant would be recommended to another collector because of a special interest, e.g., places names, riddles, stories, ballads, and so forth. An example of this information on the file card would be:

Last name	first	middle (of informant)
Address:	street, town, county:	phone:
Age:	occupation:	nationality:
Name suggested by ..... (to collector) On: (date)		
Suggested topics:		
Visited:	date, by (collector)	
Revisited:		
Collection made:	Tapes .....	Notebooks ..... (check)

With this information available, later collectors can continue at whatever point the present group stops.

Since Brown County was virgin territory for all members of the project, we were faced with a problem which is typical for the field worker who enters a new territory: the determination of what types of folklore actually exist in the area. The first step was to peruse the available Indiana, and particularly Brown County material. Although very little was available in the way of folklore collections, books such as Paul G. Brewster's *Ballads and Songs of Indiana*,<sup>3</sup> Leah Jackson Wolford's *The Play-Party in Indiana*<sup>4</sup> and Mabel Evangeline Neal's *Brown County Songs and Ballads*<sup>5</sup> proved of some help. Since only one of the three volumes deals specifically with Brown County, we relied on these books to supply basic information about Indiana folklore. On the whole, however, one of the primary tasks of the project was to determine what existed, and then to find it. Later,

after determining national and regional origins of informants, collections from other areas proved valuable.

The folklore which was collected fell into three general categories: stories, traditions and beliefs, and ballads and songs. The first classification included stories dealing with place names, tall tales, and anecdotes; by far the broadest classification was that of "tradition," which dealt with planting signs, omens, water witching, pregnancy signs, and so forth; the heading of ballads and songs is self-explanatory. Perhaps some actual examples of collecting situations and the types of material which were found would be advantageous in providing a better picture of Brown County folklore. To facilitate this, I have transcribed excerpts from some of the tapes which I collected in Brown County.

The advantages of team cooperation can be shown in the following example, a story from Mr. Jack Woods in Nashville, about Tom Scroggums, a teller of and hero in tall tales. Maurice Schmaier, a member of the project, collected more of these tales, and is now planning an extensive study of Tom Scroggums' stories.

*. . . he was hunting quail or anything that he might find. He saw about a half dozen quail sitting on the limb of a tree. He wondered how he would shoot and get with one shot as many quail as possible. So it dawned on him that he had better maybe split the limb with his shot. He did so and caught their toes in the crack. [Laughter] In climbing the tree to get his quail, a button bursted off of his trousers and flew across the creek and killed a rabbit. He had on boots, and when he waded across the creek to get his rabbit, he found that his boots were full of fish. . . .*

I collected this well-known tale in Brown County twice, and it was found by other members of the project a number of other times, but this variant is outstanding for its completeness. Not only does this text contain the well-known basic motif of the split limb, Motif X1124.3.1, and that of the bursting button, but also the element of the fish caught in the boot while wading, Motif X1112.<sup>6</sup>

One of the most popular kinds of tradition in Brown County is that of the place-name tale. The following excerpt told by Billy Watkins, presents three versions of the origin of the name of the town of Gnawbone.

*. . . a man asked directions one time of another man. The man directed him up the road 'til he came to a fellow who sat gnawing on a bone. And that was one version. Another version was that another fella' directed a man to a certain place where a dog was lying in the road gnawing on a bone. Another version was a Civil War version that a regiment of Civil War soldiers were stationed there during the Civil War and due to the remoteness of the place, they very nearly starved to death and they gnawed on the bone all winter. . . .*

This example demonstrates a certain sophistication toward the traditions encountered in the Nashville area of Brown County. This excerpt shows an awareness that the Gnawbone place name is a story which varies from individual to individual, and, unlike some of the Tom Scroggums tales, must not necessarily be believed by the informant. Although there is a certain element of belief shown by some informants, this is lessened by the many statements that "this is just the way I heard it," and other expressions of limited or non-acceptance.

One of the most widespread of the folklore phenomena is that of dowsing, divining, or, as it is called in Brown County, water witching. As might be expected, an individual who can witch or locate water by means of a forked stick is most important to a pre-public utilities area. Since many parts of the county have obtained running water only recently, water witching is still widely known and accepted.

The following excerpt is from Mrs. Lucinda Rhodes, a charming lady in her eighties:

Winkelman: *Oh, I did want to ask you, have you heard anything about water witching?*

Rhodes: *Yes, yes. An' I believe in it, too.*

Winkelman: *Does it work?*

Rhodes: *Yes, it works. Now they, they've had it here in Brown County and it works. You know when you get near the water, that the switch turns like, you know, and does like that, yes, they they, theywitched a lot 'a water here in Brown County.*

Winkelman: *Uh, have you ever seen anyone do it?*

Rhodes: *No, I didn't, cause I wouldn't be likely to, you know, but then they do do it. And the switch will turn when you get over the water is, just [to go to town]. [laughs]*

Winkelman: .....you can just take any, a little piece of stick and do it?

Rhodes: *Well, I, I don't know if it's a certain kind of a stick or not. But anyhow, they take this, I believe it's a willa', and they take it and . . . it'll do it.*

A somewhat less convinced point of view was taken by Grover Percifield:

Percifield: . . . He started to witch and he come to the vein and he started south. Just afore he got to the fence he said 'sharp turn to the right.' I se telling a feller about it, and he said he didn't want to climb over the fence. [laughter]

Winkelman: *Did he, uh, find water?*

Percifield: *Yeah, he found water about 25 feet.*

Winkelman: *Uh, you were telling me . . . every time the rod nodded, then something—*

Percifield: Yeah. Had a peach tree fork, and he said every nod down is a foot to water. If it nodded 20 feet, hit water at 20 feet.

Winkelman: Hmm. And did this work when he did it for you?

Percifield: Yeah. Got a little water, but not too much. [laughter]

Winkelman: Uh, you say he used a peach tree. Can you use any kind or is peach tree the one you use?

Percifield: Any kind of a peach tree . . . fork, I think.

Here one sees two examples of acceptance: Mrs. Rhodes complete in belief, Grover Percifield showing the first signs of skepticism. On the whole, I found that the individuals with whom I had interviews believed that water witching worked and that only certain people had the power to witch water. Other than that, no one was able to offer an explanation of this phenomenon.

Since Brown County is an agricultural area, the members of the project went in with the expectation of finding lore dealing with the planting and harvesting of crops. Some of the most widely spread traditions were concerned with the moon, i.e., planting and other activities dealing with the ground and the placing of foreign objects on or in the soil during the correct phases of the moon. Jack Woods tells about "planting with the moon" in the following excerpt.

. . . Well, whether or not there is anything in it, there was people years ago that did believe in it, and a certain time in the moon they would plant vegetables or build their rail fencing . . . uh, I don't know what. I don't know which time in the moon that it was, whether they called it the dark moon or the light moon, but they did believe in it, and . . . uh, I never, I never did know whether or not there was anything to it . . . I couldn't tell about that.

In this statement, elements of non-oral tradition have become evident. In talking to some of my informants, the *Farmer's Almanac* was mentioned as being the source of knowledge for the phases of the moon. An interesting further study would be the influence of the *Almanac* on this tradition. In any case, I found that although widely known, planting with the moon seems to be less firmly accepted than most of the other traditions which were collected.

Some excellent songs and ballads were found in Brown County. Among these were "Frankie and Johnny," "The Two Little Babes," a ballad which may be traced back to the sixteenth century English broadside, and "The Little Mohee." One of the greatest surprises was that "Pearl Bryan," an Indiana ballad, could not be found in a complete version. Almost everyone interviewed had known or at least heard it, but very few informants could sing any of it, and no one could remember the complete song. One of the fragments was sung by Mrs. Gladys Kessinger.<sup>7</sup>

## PEARL BRYAN

Was Scott, Jackson, Walling that took Pearl Bryan's life,  
 On one rainy evening, with a deserted carving knife.  
 Jackson done the planning, Walling followed on,  
 'Was no fault of Pearl.

Poor Pearl, poor Pearl, she tried to save her life;  
 She never dreamed of murder on that stormy night.  
 She pled with all exertion, pleading was in vain;  
 It was the fault of Jackson, that was what they say.

*J = 76-92*

Was-- Scott, Jack-son, Wal- ling that took Pearl Bry- an's  
 life, on one rain- y eve-ning with a de-  
 sert- ed carv- ing knife. Jack- son done the  
 plan- ing, Wal- ling fol- lowed on,  
 was-- no fault of Pearl--- (hum)  
 Poor---- Pearl, poor Pearl, she tried to save her  
 life; she ne- ver dreamed of mur- der on that stormy  
 night. She pled with all ex- er- tition, plead-ing was in  
 vain; it was the fault of Jack- son,  
 that was what they say.

Informant: Gladys Kassingar  
 Nashville, Indiana  
 Transcribed: 4 December 1960  
 D. Winkelman

Mrs. Lucinda Rhodes, Mrs. Kessinger's mother, could tell me the sequence of the story, but she could not sing more than these two stanzas of the ballad. It is interesting that of those who did remember any part of the song, this was the section which was generally known.

One of the favorite items in my collection is a ballad sung by Claude Graham. This ballad, "Old Daniel," is a variant of "Sir Lionel" or "Old Bangum" (Child 18), and contains most of the basic elements of this song which can be traced back to the seventeenth century. The following are the first two stanzas of the ballad.

### OLD DANIEL

Old Daniel blew his wooden horn,  
Ky-o-killy;  
Old Daniel blew his wooden horn,  
Ky-o-killy-ko-killy-ko-kum;  
Old Daniel blew his wooden horn,  
He blew it early in the morn,  
Ky-o-killy-ko-killy-ko-kum.

There is a wild boar in this glen,  
Ky-o-killy;  
There is a wild boar in this glen,  
Ky-o-killy-ko-killy-ko-kum;  
There is a wild boar in this glen,  
He's crushed the bones of a thousand men,  
Ky-o-killy-ko-killy-ko-kum.

*J = 80  
Strophe 3*

Old Dan-i-el tracked him to his den, ky-ho---- kil-ly; Old  
Dan-i-el tracked him to his den, ky-ho-- kil-ly ko kil-ly ko  
kum; Old Dan-i-el tracked him to his den, there  
laid the bones of a thou-sand men, ky-ho-- kil-ly ko kil-ly ko  
kum.

Informant: Claude Graham  
Nashville, Indiana  
Transcribed: 8 December 1960  
By: D. Winkelman

Like many American variants, this contains no mention of the wild woman or the purpose of Daniel's trip to the forest.<sup>7</sup> This is unusual because of the Scotch background of the informant.

Material with non-folk sources was found in Brown County. In the following excerpt, the informant has been asked whether she is familiar with "Barbara Allen."

Mrs. Kessinger: *But oh, I used to know that a long time ago; Mama, you used to know it.*

Mrs. Rhodes: *I knew it years .....*

Kess: *But boy, that woman sings it every day.*

Rhodes: *"The Love of Barbara Allen."* ..... *you remember the, down . . . the briar grew on one of their graves and the other'n a rose?*

Kess: *Well, I think .....*

Rhodes: ..... *And one, one, but they twined together though, in the end. It's really pretty.*

Kess: *It's really, if ya' know the whole thing, it's really pretty. I, I could get it for ya', cause this lady sings it every day on the television.*

Winkelman: *Hmm.*

Rhodes: *Well—*

Kess: *She sings it, she's just one, girl, she is, and, why she's just a-goin' to town with that television. She'll sing three numbers and one of them she just has to sing ....., she has to sing it nearly every day. 'Gets so many requests for it.*

Rhodes: *Well, what do you think! Well [laughs] . . . that Barbara Allen, though, is a, is a . . . heart breaker.*

The existence of mass media as a means of introducing or re-introducing folklore to a group is not a new phenomenon. The picture of the hawker selling broadsides is one which goes back to at least the sixteenth century, and is in some ways similar to the above situation. The problem is a difficult one in that the average individual accepts a printed text or a tune sung via the radio, phonograph, or television as being more correct than that which he knows. It seems to me, however, that there is a possibility for a definite study even in a case of this kind where the folklorist finds a non-folk element. Here is a new field of study: the influence of mass media upon the folk. An informant's suggestion that she can ". . . get it for ya' cause this lady sings it every day on the television," may be disturbing at first, but there is a value to be gained as well as a certain humor in the situation.

The Brown County Project demonstrates the large quantity of material which is still available for the folklorist close to home as well as the practicality of close cooperation between collectors. More-

over, it reinforces the value of collection in depth which leads the folklorist to a greater understanding of a particular area and of the folk process as a whole.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Egan Hyatt, *Folk-lore of Adams County, Illinois* (New York: Memoirs of the Alma Egan Hyatt Foundation, 1935).

<sup>2</sup> Emelyn Elizabeth Gardner, *Folklore of the Schoharie Hills* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1937).

<sup>3</sup> Paul G. Brewster, *Ballads and Songs of Indiana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1940).

<sup>4</sup> Leah Jackson Wolford, *The Play-Party in Indiana*, edited by W. Edson Richmond and William Tillson (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1959).

<sup>5</sup> Mabel Evangeline Neal, *Brown County Songs and Ballads* (Unpublished thesis from Indiana University, 1926).

<sup>6</sup> Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, Vol. 5 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1956).

<sup>7</sup> I have used the following symbols in the melodic transcription:

- a. portamento—a double tie indicates a slide from one note to the next note indicated;
- d. hold without dot—less than half again as long than the given note;
- c. inverted hold without dot—slightly shorter than the given note. For example, an eighth note with this one would be worth about a sixteenth note tied to a thirty-second;
- d. apostrophe—breath mark
- e. break or “—a lengthy pause for breath or because the words have been forgotten. This has been used in order to keep the rhythmic structure of the music intact.

#### The Second Hoosier Festival of the Hoosier Folklore Society

The Second Hoosier Festival of the Hoosier Folklore Society will take place at Clifty Inn, Clifty Falls State Park, Madison, Indiana, on August 13-17, 1961. The Festival will be directed by Mr. and Mrs. Robert W. Montgomery. Seminar discussions will be held about "The Towns of Indiana," "Transportation," "Folklore," "Museums," and "The Civil War." The total cost will be fifty dollars which will include registration, meals, and lodging from and including Sunday evening supper through Thursday breakfast.

The reservation fee of ten dollars should be sent to Miss Joyce Allen, R.R. 5, Greensburg, Indiana. This fee will be applied to the total charge of fifty dollars. Further information may be received from Miss Allen.

## THE INDIANA ISSUES AN EDITORIAL COMMENT

*Midwest Folklore* has now completed ten years of publication. During these ten years, its character has been molded in part by the interests of its editor, but he, like any other editor, has been dependent upon the materials which have been submitted to him. Strangely, he received very few contributions which dealt with folklore collected in the State of Indiana. As a consequence, although special issues of *Midwest Folklore* were given to the states of Kentucky, Illinois, and Michigan, none were given over entirely to the state in which the journal is published.

During the academic year 1959-1960, however, the assistant editor, Jan Brunvand, began a deliberate and careful search for suitable materials, and in the following year the editor himself continued the search. The results were both fortunate and rich and have resulted not in one Indiana issue but in two. Both the present volume and that to follow consist entirely of materials from Indiana. In addition, at least three more Indiana articles will appear in the Fall issue, 1961: a total of at least fourteen items. This is indeed a fortunate beginning for our second decade, and it is the hope of the editor that the well which has been tapped will continue to flow.

WER

ALAN DUNDES  
*Indiana University*  
*Bloomington, Indiana*

## BROWN COUNTY SUPERSTITIONS

### THE STRUCTURE OF SUPERSTITION

OF THE TWENTY-ONE definitions of folklore contained in the *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend*, nine make reference to superstitions. Of these nine, two use folk belief and superstition as interchangeable terms for the same genre of folklore, while six other definitions, including Stith Thompson's, specifically mention both beliefs and superstitions and by so doing, imply separate distinguishable items. Unfortunately, the *Dictionary* does not include a definition of what professional folklorists mean by the term superstition. Nor, incidentally, are terms like "beliefs," "custom," or "practice" defined. In the absence of standard definitions of materials which are unquestionably in the province of the folklorist, each collector is, of course, completely free to call whatever he likes superstition. Most collectors, as a matter of fact, do not even bother to try to define superstition. This raises obvious problems with regard to the classification of superstitions, and it should be no surprise that there are approximately as many schemes for the classification of superstition as there are collections of superstitions.

In 1900, Samuel Adams Drake remarked that "Superstition is not easily defined."<sup>1</sup> In the 1959 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, H. J. Rose, writing on superstition, noted that superstition is "not easy to define." Fifty-nine years of folklore scholarship

has apparently not made the task of definition any easier. Even a cursory glance at a few of the attempts to define superstition reveals some of the difficulties. Frazer and Tylor considered superstitions as survivals, that is, as beliefs and practices of savagery and barbarism which had survived among the more civilized peoples.<sup>2</sup> Such a definition would appear to preclude the possibility of new superstitions arising, such as those collected about baseball, for example.<sup>3</sup> A definition by Alexander H. Krappe contrasts superstition with religion. "Superstition," he says, "in common parlance, designates the sum of beliefs and practices shared by other people in so far as they differ from our own. What we believe and practice ourselves is, of course, Religion."<sup>4</sup> A consequence of Krappe's definition is that if superstitions are practiced only among other people, then by definition we can have no superstitions. Actually Krappe compromises slightly when he concludes: "It will be best, then, to define as 'superstition' any belief or practice that is not recommended or enjoined by any of the great religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism."<sup>5</sup>

In criticizing Krappe's definition, one may note the fundamental fallacy of almost all definitions of superstition. The definitions never deal with the material itself but rather with opinions about the material. The arbitrariness and relativity of opinion or belief make it of dubious value for purposes of defining. If one Christian sect endorses the practice of making the sign of the cross to ward off bad luck, is the practice no longer a superstition? The same difficulties arise in the definition of mythology. Mythology believed in or endorsed by authority is called religion while religion without belief is mythology. One must remember that the Greeks did not call their religion mythology. It may well be, ethnologically speaking, very important to note that religious narratives not believed are myths while religious beliefs not believed are superstitions, but this observation does not constitute an adequate definition of either myth or superstition. Thus while the collector should as a matter of course record whether or not a superstition is believed, belief is not a reliable criterion for defining superstition. Certainly, in practice, folklorists do not refuse to collect an item simply because the informant does not believe it.

The majority of definitions of superstition not only depend upon the notion of belief, but in addition postulate elements of fear and irrationality. Bidney, for example, says that a superstition is "a mode of fear based on some irrational or mythological belief and usually involves some taboo."<sup>6</sup> According to Bidney, beliefs in which there

is no element of irrational fear should be distinguished from genuine superstitions. Thus, if the informant has an irrational fear of a black cat's crossing his path, the collector has found a superstition. If the informant merely remembers a statement about a black cat that his grandfather used to make, the collector has something else. Defining superstition in terms of irrational fear is an example of a definition in terms of genesis. The definition postulates the origin of superstition. But even assuming the genesis through irrational fear is correct, one cannot assume that the genetic cause of a cultural item is identical with the cause for the continuity or persistence of that item.<sup>7</sup> Moreover the explanation of the original cause of an object does not necessarily explain what that object is.

Perhaps the most common definition of superstition is that which employs the criterion of validity in the sense of objective scientific truth. Thus H. J. Rose defines superstition as "*the acceptance of beliefs or practices groundless in themselves and inconsistent with the degree of enlightenment reached by the community to which one belongs.*" Puckett defines superstition in much the same way: "Superstition at any time would seem to be those beliefs not receiving the sanction of the more advanced mores of that generation."<sup>8</sup> Both of these definitions are relativistic inasmuch as there is no way of determining exactly what the degree of enlightenment of a given community is or what constitutes the advanced mores of that community. The groundlessness of the practices is irrelevant. As a matter of fact, some superstitions have been scientifically verified, especially weather signs.<sup>9</sup> The homeopathic magic of many cures in folk medicine has, of course, been found to be the scientific basis of immunization through inoculation. Truth should not be a criterion in defining superstition. There are true as well as false superstitions. In the case of cures, for example, even "false" cures can be effective with many of the psychosomatic illnesses.<sup>10</sup> Another factor to be considered is that scientific truth is itself relative. In fact, much of the scientific truth of the past such as astrology lives on in the form of superstitions. Who knows which of the present-day scientific truths will withstand the test of time?

If genetic and the other definitions mentioned cannot be relied upon, how then may superstitions be defined to such an extent that one would know a superstition when he came across one? Such a definition might be achieved by considering what superstitions are, rather than emphasizing how they came about or whether or not they are true or believed. In other words, the definition should be descriptive utilizing criteria of form rather than criteria of genesis or

belief. One striking attempt to define superstitions in this way was made by Puckett in his *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro* of 1926. Puckett distinguishes between "control-signs" and prophetic signs. Control signs, which can be either positive or negative, are those signs "which allow of human control."<sup>11</sup> Puckett derives a formula for control signs which is: "If you (or some one else) behave in such and such a manner, so and so will happen."<sup>12</sup> Prophetic signs, according to Puckett, are "those undomesticated causal relationships in which the human individual has no play." Under prophetic signs Puckett includes omens of good and bad luck, weather signs, and dream signs. With prophetic signs "man has no control and submits helplessly to the decrees of nature."<sup>13</sup> Puckett's formula for prophetic signs is: "If something (outside of your control) behaves in such and such a manner, so and so will result."<sup>14</sup> Puckett is to be commended for trying to define superstitions in terms of form. However, his definition and classification are not wholly acceptable.

Following Puckett in part, the following tentative definition of superstition is offered. *Superstitions are traditional expressions of one or more conditions and one or more results with some of the conditions signs and others causes.* This is meant as a generic definition of superstition. There are superstitions in which there is but one condition and one result. For example, "If a dog howls, it's a sign of death" (17). On the other hand, superstitions involving divination often have multiple conditions. For example, "In the spring the first mourning dove you hear cooing, take off one of your stockings or socks, turn it wrongside out and in the heel will be a hair, the color of the hair of the person you're going to marry" (202). By and large, results are usually singular but occasionally they may be plural: "In dog days, dogs are liable to go mad and snakes are blind" (68) or "If mourning doves nest close to your house, it's good luck and you're a nice person" (20). With regard to formalistic features, Puckett was correct in noting that the majority of superstitions have a condition marker, namely "if." However, it is important to realize that the absence of a condition marker such as "if" or "when" does not mean that a condition is absent. For example, specific conditions are implicit in the following superstitions: "Friday begun will never be done" (197); "A red sunrise is a sign of bad weather" (3). Often the condition is stated in terms of an imperative injunction such as: "Don't ever return borrowed salt, it's bad luck" (141), "Never cut your fingernails on Sunday" (199), and "Never move your broom" (123). Of course, if the results are indicated, such superstitions could be restated in terms of

Puckett's formula (e.g. If you return borrowed salt, you'll have bad luck).

With regard to classification, one can see that, generally speaking, superstitions can be grouped either by condition or by result. Neither is entirely satisfactory and a combination of both results in unavoidable duplication of material. For example, if all superstitions were classified according to conditions, then a folklorist interested especially in signs of death would have to read through all the superstitions dealing with dogs and hoes in order to cull the appropriate items. On the other hand, if superstitions are classified by results, as is most common, under such categories as birth, marriage, luck, etc., the folklorist interested in superstitions concerning dogs or hoes would have to read through all the superstitions. Indexes, naturally, are of some assistance but one does not know which of fifty entries on dogs deal with superstitions in which the dog is in the condition. Ideally, superstitions should be presented twice, first according to condition and second according to result. However, this is clearly not practical. A possible solution is to classify by condition and in addition to provide an index of results. The reason for condition classification is that frequently only the condition is collected. In the example mentioned previously of "Never cut your fingernails on Sunday," only the condition is present. The informant was asked as to the consequences of disobeying the injunction, but she did not know. Puckett suggests that indefinite consequences, i.e. good or bad luck, are a later weakening of superstitions which originally had specific consequences such as marriage or death.<sup>15</sup> If there is any kind of an evolution of superstition, it well may be from specific results to indefinite results to the omission of any stated result. If this is the case, then clearly the condition is of prime importance and accordingly it should be made the basis of classification. One difficulty with condition classification, however, is the determination of the most significant condition. For example, what is the significant condition in the following superstition? "You go out on May the first and get a snail and place that snail on a shoebox lid and place it under your bed and the next morning, the name of the person you're going to marry will be spelled out" (201). Is it the date, the snail, the shoebox, or the placing of the shoebox and snail under the bed?

Having formulated a tentative definition of superstition in terms of grammatical conditions and results, there remains the task of distinguishing categories of superstitions. If one analyzes the relationship between the conditions and the results, one finds three basic categories of superstitions. One category corresponds to Puckett's

prophetic signs. This category, which for the sake of convenience will be termed simply "Signs," consists of portents and omens which man may read. Signs are usually made up of single conditions and results and they often serve as the basis of prediction. Thus if one notes a ring around the moon, one can predict rain (8). Many of the signs come from human activity but it is extremely important to note that all "Sign" human activity is purely accidental or coincidental. Such activity includes dropping knives and forks, experiencing an itching nose, hand, or foot, dreaming, and so on. Actually the greater number of signs are non-human in nature consisting chiefly of celestial, animal, and plant indicators. One characteristic of signs is that the signs themselves are unavoidable, although in some instances the consequent effects may be avoided. One cannot avoid a ring around the moon. Similarly, one cannot avoid the howling of a dog or the sight of a black cat, since these are accidentally occurring phenomena not subject to human volition. In the same way, one cannot avoid the accidental dropping of knives and forks. There is, however, an even more important characteristic of sign superstitions.

Puckett speaks of prophetic signs as causal relationships and, in fact, others have made much the same comment. Lévy-Bruhl, in discussing such matters among primitives, notes that omens not only announce the desired success but they are a necessary condition of it and they guarantee and effect it.<sup>16</sup> Having assumed causality, Lévy-Bruhl is puzzled by signs and results which occur simultaneously. An example of a modern superstition illustrating this would be: "If you see a falling star, someone in the family is passing beyond" (13). Lévy-Bruhl is forced to concede that "in such circumstances *sign* does not really seem to imply *cause*."<sup>17</sup> An empirical examination of sign superstitions reveals that the relationship between condition and result is non-causal. The ring around the moon does not cause the rain; it indicates only that rain will come. The ultimate cause of the rain (as well as that of the ring around the moon) is simply not stated. Here it is necessary to distinguish antecedence from causality. As W. R. Halliday noted: "Mere priority is not causality."<sup>18</sup> A sign is not a necessary efficient cause. Since there are a number of sign superstitions for the same result, for example, rain, no one sign is necessary in the sense of being a *sine qua non*. It can rain if there is not a ring around the moon. As a matter of fact, in daytime when the moon is not ordinarily visible, there are other signs. "When the hoot owls holler in daytime, it's a sign of rain" (23).

However, the sign is usually a fixed indicator. If there is a ring around the moon, it will rain.

The second category of superstitions, which will be termed "magic," corresponds to Puckett's "Positive and Negative Control Signs." Magic superstitions often consist of multiple conditions and they serve as a means of production or prescription rather than prediction. In contrast to sign superstitions, human activity in magic superstitions is intentional rather than accidental. In fact, in this category, intentional human activity occurs in most of the superstitions, although not in all. Since the human activity is intentional, it is also avoidable. One can avoid bad luck by not walking under a ladder. Whereas sign superstitions are non-causal, magic superstitions are causal. A given effect or result will not occur unless the conditional activity does. The fulfillment of the condition is efficient cause. (There is still, of course, the formal cause which makes possible the efficient cause). Again the variety of means to the same end suggests that no condition or conditions of a magic superstition can be considered a *sine qua non* either. What is most significant in comparing sign and magic superstitions is the distinction between predicting the future and making the future.<sup>19</sup> Instead of foretelling rain, death, and bad luck, one can, using magic superstitions, produce rain, death, and bad luck. Thus instead of predicting rain from seeing a ring around the moon, one can produce rain by turning a dead snake's belly up (84). Implicit also is the contrast between human passivity and activity. Man is passive with regard to signs, but definitely active with regard to magic. In cases where agents other than man occur in magic superstitions, there is usually still some noticeable activity. Moreover, one could differentiate sign from magic in terms of belief and practice. A sign superstition entails belief only; whereas a magic superstition in its entirety involves belief and practice. Of course, as has already been noted, many magic superstitions are no longer practiced and in many cases no longer believed. Nevertheless, in theory at least, one can see that no practice was ever involved in experiencing the result of a sign superstition.

Magic superstitions frequently make use of ritual and this may be seen by examining such magic superstitions as cures and divinations.<sup>20</sup> The reason that divination is placed in this category is that it is man's actions which cause the results. In a sense, man is producing signs similar to those which occur naturally. However, whereas celestial or accidental plant, animal, or human signs cannot be avoided, divination procedures can. Furthermore, they can

be repeated as often as necessary or desired, that is, as many times as it takes for the divination to "come out right." Not only can one pull petals off hundreds of daisies but according to one informant, one can beat the system by starting with "He loves me not" (102). This is unquestionably human control. Water-witching is a form of divination which involves a magically produced rather than an accidentally produced sign. Accordingly, divination is considered magic superstition and not sign superstition.

Perhaps the most interesting category of the three might be termed "conversion." This is a hybrid category in which, for the most part, sign superstitions are converted into magic superstitions. Still other conversion superstitions are simply magic superstitions in which one or more of the preliminary conditions is a sign. A few conversion superstitions arise from the neutralizing or reversal of magic superstitions. This third category includes planting signs, wishes, and counteractants (i.e. form of counter-magic). One cannot plant corn with the best chances of success until the whippoorwill calls (203). One cannot wish unless one sees a shooting star (172) or similar sign. One cannot avoid the bad luck caused by a black cat's crossing his path unless or until a black cat crosses his path (18). It is important to notice that the preliminary sign alone has either no effect or a different meaning. The call of a whippoorwill by itself cannot cause a good corn crop nor can the sight of a shooting star by itself bring about wish-fulfillment. In conversion superstitions, man's activity is required. This is not so in the case of sign superstitions. No activity is required in interpreting either the shooting star or whippoorwill's call as a sign of death (13, 21).

A great number of conversion superstitions appear to represent man's struggle against undesirable sign or magic superstitions. Puckett wrongly assumes that the Negro as opposed to the European is unique in opposing the inevitable.<sup>21</sup> As a matter of record, wherever undesirable results are feared, that is, either unwanted results of sign or magic superstitions, conversion superstitions have been collected. For example, for the sign superstition in which bad luck results from spilling salt, there are numerous counteractants including, of course, the common practice of throwing some over one's left shoulder (208). For the magic superstition in which bad luck results from bringing a hoe in the house, the counteractant consists of backing out the same door by which one entered (207). These two counteractants are both neutralizing conversion superstitions in that the proper action cancels the undesirable result. However, there are also counteractants which do more than neutralize. Such counteractants

convert evil to good. This change is often brought about through the act of wishing. For example, it is bad luck to retrace one's steps for a forgotten article. This bad luck may be averted by many means, one of which is the simple act of sitting down (212). But the following counteractant does more than neutralize: "If you start anywhere and have to turn back, you sit down and make a wish and they say it'll come true" (214). Another example of wishing as a conversion factor occurs in connection with the sign superstition: "If you drop a comb, you'll be disappointed" (56). Stepping on the comb neutralizes this superstition but wishing changes a potentially maleficent situation into a beneficial one. "If you drop a comb, step on it, make a wish and don't say a word until someone asks you a question" (215). While it is usually unwise to generalize from a few examples, one is tempted to see a kind of evolution from a superstition with an undesirable result to a neutralizing conversion superstition to a final conversion superstition in which the individual stands to gain rather than lose. If this assumption is correct, it would explain the occurrence of the neutralizing element, (e.g. sitting down, stepping on the comb) in the final version of the superstition as the result of a process of accretion.

Although the above discussion is based upon a comparatively small number of superstitions, and for that reason may well not apply to all superstitions, it is hoped that other folklorists may be stimulated to work out a more precise definition and a better classification scheme for superstitions. To recapitulate, superstition was tentatively defined as traditional expressions of one or more conditions and one or more results with some of the conditions signs and others causes. Moreover, three categories of superstitions were distinguished: Category I, Signs; Category II, Magic; and Category III, Conversion.

## II

### SUPERSTITIONS FROM BROWN COUNTY, INDIANA

The above definition and classification were based upon the following superstitions collected in Brown County, Indiana, in the summer of 1960. The annotation is by no means exhaustive. Instead, wherever possible, reference is made to Ray Browne's *Popular Beliefs and Practices from Alabama* since his annotation is keyed\* to Wayland Hand's extensively annotated volume on superstitions in the *Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*.<sup>22</sup> The superstitions are classified by what was taken to be the most significant condition. The superstitions are grouped by category with cross-referencing to

indicate related items, as for example, counteractants to a certain sign. Within each category, conditions are listed under the headings: Celestial/Temporal; Animals; Plants; Household/Farm; and Human Body and Behavior.

#### CATEGORY I

##### *Celestial / Temporal*

1. Rainbow at morning, / Shepherd's fair warning; / Rainbow at night, / Shepherd's delight. (M.S.)<sup>23</sup>  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 220\*. Frequently shepherds are replaced by sailors (Browne, p. 220\*) and occasionally by farmers or fisherman (Hyatt, p. 20).*
2. Evening red and morning gray / Sets the traveler on his way; / But evening gray and morning red / Brings down rain upon his head. (C.M.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 206; Illinois: Hyatt, p. 21; Kentucky: Thomas, p. 192; New York: Gardner, p. 283; South: Puckett, p. 517. Browne reports a version: Evening gray, morning red, / Pours down no rain on traveler's head, p. 219\*.*
3. A red sunrise is a sign of bad weather. (R.M.)  
*Alabama: (rain) Browne, p. 213\*.*
4. If you see many rainbows, it's a sign dry weather's coming. (R.L.)  
*South: Puckett, p. 515; Alabama: (If you see a rainbow in the sky, there will be no more rain during the day) Browne, p. 219\*. This superstition might be related either to the fact that rainbows usually appear during and after rain or to the Biblical tradition of the rainbow as a covenant token.*
5. There's a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. (J.L.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 203\*.*
6. If it lightnings in the north, it'll rain before morning. (R.M.)  
*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 13. In some versions, rain will fall within twenty-four hours (Puckett, p. 515; Thomas, p. 197) or within three days (Browne, p. 211\*). In others, such lightning is a sign of dry weather (Browne, p. 207\*).*
7. If you see streaks from the sun, they say that it's the sun drawing water and it's going to rain. (V.G.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 213\*.*
8. If there's a circle around the moon, it'll rain in three days. (R.L.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 214.*
9. If there's a circle around the moon, it's a sign of rainy weather. The number of stars within the circle determines the number of days until the bad weather. (R.M., R.D.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 214\*.*
10. All births will occur within three days of a change of the moon. (R.D.)  
*The informant explained that since the moon changed every seven days, the superstition was actually a pretty safe statement. However, this would not explain a version collected in southern Indiana by Brewster (1943), p. 26: Children are born either the day before, the day of, or the day after the changing of the moon. (Cf. 175).*

11. If you can't hang your bow and arrow on the moon, no luck hunting or fishing. (P.E.)

*There is a considerable difference of opinion among the variants of this superstition. If one cannot hang arrows or a powder horn on the moon, it is a sign of dry weather in some areas, of wet weather in others. (For references, see Gardner, p. 284, nn. 135, 136.) In a version from New York, the Indians can fish if the moon is flat on its back (and thus a bow and arrows could be hung on it) (Gardner, p. 284). In a version collected by Dresslar (p. 22), when an Indian cannot hang his powder horn on the moon, he goes hunting.*

12. If a child is borned on April Fool's Day, when it's nine years old, it'll die. (D.G.)  
 13. If you see a falling star towards the earth, someone in the family is passing beyond. (P.E.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 194\*. Another version from Brown County is less euphemistic: A falling star is a sign of death in the family. (M.S.)*

14. If there's a falling star, the next death will be in the direction it falls. (L.C.)

*Ozarks: Randolph, p. 305. Other directions indicated are the direction of a birth (Browne, p. 7\*) or the direction of the wind the next day (Browne, p. 209\*).*

15. If you see Jupiter star a-twinklin', you'll have good luck the next day. (P.E.)  
 16. If a drop of rain hits a casket, there'll be another death in that family soon. (V.G.)

*Alabama: (rain on new grave) Browne, p. 184\*.*

#### Animals

17. If a dog howls, it's a sign of death. (J.L., R.D.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 191\*. For numerous additional references, see W. R. Halliday, Greek Divination (London, 1913), p. 166, n. 1.*

18. If a black cat runs across your path, it's bad luck. (L.C., J.D.)

*Alabama: Browne, pp. 226-227\*. Hyatt (pp. 88-90) lists more than twenty counteractants and Browne (p. 227\*) refers to more than twenty counteractants in the Frank C. Brown Collection.*

19. If you hear a dove in the morning, it's a sign of rain. (M.S.)

*Illinois: Hyatt, pp. 8, 29; Indiana: Busse, p. 17; Kentucky: Thomas, p. 193. The possibility that variants may arise through unintentional plays on words is suggested by a version cited by Puckett (p. 510): The mourning of the dove is a sign of rain. (Cf. 78, 202).*

20. If mourning doves nest close to your house, it's good luck and you're a nice person. (C.M.)

*In other versions, the birds are: bluebirds (Browne, p. 225), pigeons (Ferm, p. 23), robins (Hyatt, p. 70), swallows (Browne, p. 226), and woodpeckers (Hyatt, p. 71).*

21. If you hear the whippoorwill in the afternoon or any time in the day, it's a sign of a death in your family. (D.G.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 192\*. (Cf. 203).*

22. When a "rain crow" crows, it's a sign of rain. (R.D.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 215\*.*

23. When the hoot owls holler in daylight, it's a sign of rain. (C.M.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 216\**.
24. If buzzards flip-flop and do all kinds of capers in slow motion in the air, it's a sign of rain. (V.G.)  
*South: Puckett, p. 510.*
25. If a rooster comes to the door and crows early in the morning, it's a sure sign somebody's coming. (C.M., R.L.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 157\**.
26. If a hen crows, it's bad luck. (R.L.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 228\*. A hen's crow is also a sign of death (Browne, p. 192\*). The bad luck or death may be avoided by killing the hen (Gardner, p. 299; Thomas, p. 266). This may be done by simply twisting off the hen's head (Puckett, p. 487) or by eating the hen with dressing and all the trimmings (Browne, p. 228\*).*
27. When a tree frog hollers, it's gonna rain. (P.A.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 215\*.*
28. It's a sign of good luck to have a cricket in the house. (C.M.)  
*General: Dresslar, p. 46; Ferm, p. 57; Illinois: Hyatt, p. 59; Kentucky: Thomas, p. 271; Maryland: Whitney, p. 11; New York: Gardner, p. 280; Tennessee: Farr, p. 8.*
29. If a measuring worm gets on you, you're going to get a new dress or a new suit. (C.M.)  
*Alabama: (dress) Browne, p. 149\*, (suit) p. 151\*.*
30. If a measure worm was climbing up a person's leg, they used to say the person was going to get a new pair of pants or if the measure worm was on the arm, a new shirt. (H.G.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 148\*.*
31. If the woolly worms are plentiful and you see a lot of them, it'll be a heavy winter. (R.D.)  
*Illinois: (caterpillars) Hyatt, p. 3; Kentucky: (tumblebugs) Thomas, p. 185.*
32. If a woolly worm is half light and half dark, half the winter will be light winter and the other half cold winter. If the woolly worm is all light, it'll be a light winter. If the woolly worm is all dark, it'll be a cold winter. (W.S.)  
*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 3; Kentucky: Thomas, p. 184.*
33. If there's a big crop of caterpillars, there'll be an epidemic of typhoid fever. (M.S.)

#### *Plants*

34. When the leaves on the trees turn up, it's going to rain. (C.M.)  
*Illinois: Hyatt, pp. 6, 28; Kentucky: Thomas, p. 203; New York: Gardner, p. 285.*
35. When the leaves on trees turn upside down, it's a sign of rain. (C.G.)  
*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 28.*
36. When the corn begins to silk, if you see a red silk first, you'll hear of a birth soon. (C.M.)  
*Elsewhere this sign indicates that one will attend a wedding rather than a funeral (Randolph, p. 182; Thomas, pp. 34, 221).*

37. When the corn begins to silk, if you see a white silk first, you're going to hear of a death soon. (C.M.)

*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 558. In Kentucky (Thomas, p. 221), it is a sign of bad health or that one will attend a funeral soon.*

38. If the corn husks hug the corn and the husks are thick, it'll be a cold winter. (C.M., R.D., M.S.)

*Alabama: Browne, pp. 208\*, 222\*.*

39. If the corn husks are open at the top and thin, it'll be a mild winter. (C.M.)

*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 6.*

40. If persimmon seeds are pronged like a fork, it'll be a cold winter. If they're shaped like a knife, it'll be a mild winter. (V.G.)

*The informant thought she might have reversed the signs. Although Hyatt (pp. 56, 320) refers to finding a knife, fork, and spoon in persimmon seeds, he makes no mention of persimmon seeds as seasonal weather prognostics.*

41. If you find a four leaf clover, it's good luck. (J.D.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 243\*. (Cf. 100).*

#### *Household / Farm*

42. It's good luck to find a penny. (R.L.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 167\*.*

43. A two dollar bill is bad luck. (R.D.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 167\*. The counteractant consists of tearing off one or more corners of the bill (Browne, p. 167\*). Ferm (p. 152) suggests that the superstition arose from betting in horse races.*

44. If you find a horseshoe, it's good luck. (M.S., R.D.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 229\*. (Cf. 134).*

45. If you drop a fork, it'll point to the direction from which company will come. (R.M.)

*Kentucky: Thomas, p. 146. Illinois: (knife) Hyatt, p. 382; (spoon), p. 384.*

46. If you drop a fork, whichever way the prongs point, you'll have company from that direction. (D.G.)

*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 384. Dresslar (p. 56) cites a superstition in which the prongs point to the house of one's lover.*

47. If you drop a fork, a woman is coming. If you drop a knife, a man is coming. (D.G.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 160\*.*

48. If you drop a fork, a woman's coming 'cause the fork's on the left side of the plate. (M.S.)

49. If you drop a knife, a man's coming 'cause the knife's on the right side of the plate. (M.S.)

50. If you drop a fork, a man is coming. (O.J., L.C.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 160\*.*

51. If you drop a knife, a woman is coming. (L.C.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 160\*.*

52. If you drop a big spoon, a large family is coming. (L.C.)

*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 384; Kentucky: Thomas, p. 146.*

53. If you drop a little spoon, a small family is coming. (L.C.)  
*Alabama: (small girl is coming) Browne, p. 161\**.

54. My grandmother used to say when someone dropped a fork: "Somebody's coming dirtier than I am." (P.A.)  
*Usually for this result, a dishrag is dropped (Browne, p. 159\*)*.

55. If you drop a dishrag, someone's coming nastier than you are. (J.L.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 160\*. Puckett (pp. 439-440) gives an interesting counteractant for a similar superstition. An accidentally dropped dishrag means that a visitor is coming but if one does not want the visitor to come, one can put the dropped dishrag in molasses. Another method is found in a Kentucky counteractant reported by Thomas (p. 164): If you wish to prevent a visitor's arrival that has been forecast by the dropping of a dish-rag,, step backward over the rag.*

56. If you drop a comb, you'll be disappointed. (V.G.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 147\*. Hyatt (p. 145) and Thomas (p. 164) give the neutralizing counteractant of stepping on the comb to avoid the bad luck indicated by dropping it. For a more positive counteractant, see superstition 215 in Category Three.*

57. If you turn a chair over, you won't get married that year. (L.C.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 178\*; (bad luck), p. 132\*. (Cf. 139).*

58. When a member of the family dies, the clock should be stopped until after the corpse is buried. When the clock is started again, if it strikes more times than it should, then another member of the family will go out in that many days. (R.L.)  
*Ozarks: Randolph, p. 301. With regard to the practice of stopping the clock (actually a Category Two superstition), Browne (p. 187\*) records just the conditional injunction. In the version cited by Thomas (p. 72), the indefinite result averted is bad luck while in Gardner's version (p. 295), if the clock is not stopped, there will be another death in the family. The order here cited is probably the reverse of any possible evolutionary sequence.*

#### *Human Body and Behavior*

59. If your nose itches, company's coming. (L.C., J.D., O.J., R.L.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 158\*. A curious reinforcing supplement reported by Thomas (p. 76) includes rubbing one's nose on wood to make the arrival certain. A more typical conversion superstition is that mentioned by Puckett (pp. 449-450) whereby the company may be prevented from coming by an upward rubbing of the nose.*

60. If your ear itches and burns, someone's talking about you. (J.D.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 124\*. For additional references, see W. R. Halliday, Greek Divination (London, 1913), p. 177, n. 2.*

61. If your left palm itches, somebody's going to give you money. (L.C., J.D.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 165\*. This sign is also found with the right palm (Browne, p. 165\*).*

62. If your right palm itches, you're going to shake hands with somebody. (L.C., J.D.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 156\*. This sign is also found with the left palm (Browne, p. 156\*).*

63. If your right foot itches, you're going to walk on strange land. (J.D.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 153\**.

64. If you get a hair in your mouth, you're going to kiss a fool. (L.C.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 172; Illinois: Hyatt, p. 142; Indiana: Busse, p. 24; Kentucky: Thomas, p. 82.*

65. If you dream of white horses, it's a sign of death. (J.L.)  
*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 306; Kentucky: Thomas, p. 157; New York: Gardner, p. 287; Ozarks: Randolph, p. 331.*

66. If you dream of muddy water, it's a sign of trouble. (J.L.)  
*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 314; Indiana: Brewster (1943), p. 30; Ozarks: Randolph, 331. It is also a sign of bad luck (Browne, p. 252\*) and death (Browne, p. 194\*).*

67. If you dream of fruit or flowers out of season, it's trouble out of reason. (J.L.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 252\*.*

## CATEGORY II

## Celestial / Temporal

68. In dog days, dogs are liable to go mad and snakes are blind. (R.D.)  
*Kentucky: (snakes) Thomas, p. 247; Nebraska: (snakes) Pound, p. 37; Ozarks: (dogs) Randolph, p. 142; (snakes), p. 256. (Cf. 196).*

69. When the sign is in the knees, you'll always have a little pain. (P.E.)

70. My grandmother, Granny Deckard, used to take water from the first snow in March and use it as an eyewash throughout the year. This melted snow water prevented sore or weak eyes. (R.D.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 63\*. Hyatt has collected a number of other uses of March snow water. These include preventing baldness (p. 143), improving complexion (p. 181), removing freckles (p. 184), and preventing hand chapping (p. 253).*

## Animals

71. If a hog is wallowing in a mudhole, he'll never get his back wet. (W.L.)

72. You steal a piece of bacon and hide it. Don't tell anybody where it is and the wart will disappear. (J.D.)  
*This wart cure usually entails rubbing the wart with the bacon (Gardner, p. 272; Hyatt, p. 190; Richmond, p. 134), but Dresslar (p. 108) gives a version similar to the one collected in Brown County. (Cf. 73, 101, 112, 129, 130, and 143).*

73. Take an old bone from an animal that died and rub the wart with it nine times, then put the bone back exactly the way it was when you found it and never look at that bone again and the wart will go away. (R.D.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 112\*. (Cf. 72).*

74. Two people pull a pulley-bone. The person with the shortest piece will get a wish. If they put it over the door, the first person of the opposite sex who walks under the bone will be the person they're going to marry. (M.S.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 173\*. In some versions, objects other than a wishbone may be employed such as a horseshoe (Hyatt, p. 351), four leaf clover (Hyatt, p. 347), mistletoe (Browne, p. 175) or a peapod containing nine peas (Hyatt, p. 354, Puckett, p. 326, Thomas, p. 49).*

*Incidentally, the informant reported that the pulley-bone procedure did correctly reveal the identity of her husband-to-be, although she also stated that she probably would have married this person in any case.*

75. If two people take the pulley-bone and pull it until they break it in two, the person that gets the shortest piece will get married first. (J.L.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 173\*.*

76. If a girl puts the long piece of a wishbone over the door, the first man to walk under the bone will be the man she's going to marry. (C.M., L.C.)

*General: Dresslar, p. 122; Indiana: Brewster (1943), p. 31. The question of whether the short or long piece of the wishbone is most effective is solved in one superstition in which both pieces are put up, each over a different door. (Browne, p. 173\*).*

77. If two people pull a wishbone, whoever gets the longer piece gets his or her wish. (C.M.)

*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 324; Kentucky: Thomas, pp. 21, 62; Maryland: Whitney, p. 75; South: Puckett, p. 329. Other versions favor the smaller piece: Two people pull the chicken pulley-bone, make a wish, and the person with the smallest piece gets his wish. (R.D.)*

78. Never kill a mourning dove as you'll soon have a death in your family. (C.M.)

*Alabama: (bad luck) Browne, p. 225\*. (Cf. 19, 20, and 202).*

79. If you kill a snake in the morning, it'll move yet until after the sun goes down. (W.L.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 231\*.*

80. If you kill a snake, don't touch it, because it doesn't die until after sundown. (C.M.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 231\*.*

81. If you kill a snake, its mate will come at sundown. (L.C.)

*General: Ferm, p. 206; Illinois: Hyatt, p. 72; Kentucky: Thomas, p. 274.*

82. If you're sure to kill the first snake that you see in the spring, you've gotten rid of your worst enemy. (C.M.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 231\*. Dreaming of killing a snake brings about the same result (Gardner, p. 288; Hyatt, p. 311; Pound, p. 32).*

83. If you kill the first snake of the season, you've gotten rid of an enemy. (R.D.)

\**Illinois: Hyatt, p. 73; Kentucky: Thomas, p. 274.*

84. If you kill a snake and turn its belly up, it'll rain in twenty-four hours. (H.G., J.L.)

*Alabama: Browne, pp. 209-210\*.*

85. If you kill a snake and lay him on his back, it's supposed to rain. (J.D.)

*Alabama: Browne, pp. 209-210\*.*

86. A black snake will kill both rattlesnakes or copperheads by choking them. If a black snake is bitten by one of the poisonous snakes, he will run off and then come back. It won't die. (W.L.)

*The informant explained that blacksnakes knew about a special antidotal herb which rendered venom harmless. Engelke (p. 67) collected a somewhat similar superstition in West Virginia: When snakes are bitten by poisonous snakes, they run to a certain weed and eat it to neutralize the poison.*

87. A white and black 'spreading viper' will, if punched with a stick, bite himself and die. (H.G.)

*Pound* (p. 35) reports a Nebraska superstition that a rattlesnake will bite itself and die if surrounded by cactus thorns by a road runner. *Engelke* (p. 67) states that snakes bite themselves purposely.

88. A woman with child should not see a snake, 'cause it'll mark the child. (C.M.)

*Illinois*: *Hyatt*, p. 119; *Ozarks*: *Randolph*, p. 197. (*Cf.* 152, 153).

89. If you handle a toad, you'll get warts on your hand. (J.L.)  
*Alabama*: *Browne*, p. 111\*.

90. If a snapping turtle has a bite on something, it won't let loose until it thunders. (H.G., C.M.)

*Alabama*: *Browne*, p. 224\*. The same superstition is related in connection with crayfish (*Browne*, p. 224\*), thundersnakes (*Browne*, p. 231\*), and crabs (*Thomas*, p. 271).

91. When someone dies, the bees must be told or else they'll die. (C.M.)

*Kentucky*: *Thomas*, p. 271; *South*: *Puckett*, p. 82. A common version results in the bees leaving instead of dying. (See Brewster [1952], p. 256, n. 108 for references.) For a discussion of this superstition including an English version of 1621 and Whittier's poem on the subject, see Thomas Sharper Knowlson, *The Origins of Popular Superstitions and Customs* (London, 1934), pp. 207-210. (*Cf.* 177).

92. If someone in the family dies, you want to move the bees and tell them or else they'll die. (R.L.)

93. To stop bleeding: Collect spider webs and put them over the wound and bind them down. (R.D.)

*Alabama*: *Browne*, p. 35\*. (*Cf.* 116, 118).

#### Plants

94. If you peel an apple without breaking the peel and you throw it back over your left shoulder, the peel will form one initial of the person you're going to marry. (R.D.)

*Alabama*: *Browne*, p. 168\*. Ecological localizations may occur, as evidenced by the variety of fruits used in the same manner: peach (*Hyatt*, p. 330), pear (*Browne*, p. 174\*), and orange (*Dresslar*, p. 16).

95. Take a little pinch of assafoetida and sew it up in a little piece of cloth. Tie on strings and wear it around the neck to keep away diphtheria. (O.J.)

*This is a common preventive for a number of specific diseases as well as disease in general. For example, it also prevents measles (*Browne*, p. 79\*) and whooping cough (*Browne*, p. 116\*).*

96. You wear a bag containing assafoetida around your neck to keep from getting any disease. (R.D.)

*Alabama*: *Browne*, pp. 15\*, 119\*.

97. If you wear a bag of assafoetida around your neck, it'll frighten away evil spirits and keep you from getting disease. (C.M.)

*Alabama*: (witches) *Browne*, p. 198.

98. Anybody that has rheumatism should carry a buckeye in his pocket. (P.A., O.J.)

*Alabama*: *Browne*, p. 88\*.

99. When a woman is in a family way, all the calomel you can pile on a dime will cause her to come around. (\*\*)  
*No parallel was found for this particular means of causing abortion.*  
*(Cf. 115, 146).*

100. A four leaf clover brings good luck. (P.A.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 243\*. (Cf. 41).*

101. You rub one grain of corn over a wart nine times and throw it to a chicken and your wart will leave. (J.L.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 112\*. (Cf. 72, 73, 112, 129, 130, and 143).*

102. You take a daisy and pick off the petals while saying "He loves me, he loves me not." Whichever is the last one you say when you pick off the last petal is the truth. (R.M., D.G.)  
*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 329; Indiana: Busse, p. 22; Kentucky: Thomas, p. 35; Maryland: Whitney, p. 73. Other plants are sometimes used, as for example dandelions (Browne, p. 170\*) and the same verbal form may be used in counting the buttons on one's dress (Browne, p. 171). One informant (D.G.) claimed that by always starting out with "he loves me not," it'll come out right, i.e. "he loves me."*

103. Take a dandelion that's gone to seed. If you can blow the tuft off at one blow, "he loves you." (R.M.)  
*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 329; Kentucky: Thomas, p. 60. Dandelions are frequently used for divination. For example, the number of seeds remaining after blowing one or more times can indicate: the number of children one will have (Hyatt, p. 108; Thomas, p. 35), how many lovers one is going to have (Hyatt, p. 336), how many years until one's wedding (Hyatt, p. 336; Thomas, p. 35), the number of days until one will get a whipping (Thomas, p. 15), and the time of day (Thomas, p. 218).*

104. Scrape the slippery elm bark and make a tea with the scrapings and it's good for constipation. (M.S.)  
*Slippery elm bark tea apparently has a variety of uses, some of which are related to the one found in Brown County. It may be taken for digestive troubles (Randolph, p. 96), to cure diarrhea (Hyatt, p. 226), to cure piles (Hyatt, p. 275) and it may be given in fruit juice to someone who has swallowed glass (Browne, p. 68) or given to horses with worms (Hyatt, p. 103). It is also recommended simply as a good healthful tea (Browne, p. 122\*).*

105. If someone gives you flowers or seed, don't thank them or else they won't grow. (C.M.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 243\*.*

106. Never thank anyone for giving you flowers, it's bad luck. (V.G.)  
*See Brewster (1952), p. 252, n. 93 for references.*

107. If you take flowers away from a cemetery, you'll soon take them back. (J.L.)  
*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 594; Kentucky: (bad luck) Thomas, p. 74.*

108. Nobody but a fool or a half-wit can grow gourds. (C.M.)  
*The informant explained this superstition's origin by noting that since gourds have no food value, no serious farmer would plant them.*

109. To cure malaria—"ager," you take iron-weed roots, boil them, then take them out of the water and boil the water down and drink the water. (R.L.)

*Illinois: (chewing ironweed checks diarrhea) Hyatt, p. 226.*

110. (For hives) Ground Ivy which has little blue flowers is used. Tea is made from Ground Ivy leaves and it will cure hives. (P.A.)

*Tennessee: Frazier, p. 2.*

111. Take Milk Pursley and cook the plant, boil it. Make a tea and it will cure Cholera infantum which is what they used to call flu of the bowels. (P.A.)

112. Squeeze the milk out of milkweed and put it on the warts and after a while the warts will go away. (D.G.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 113\*. (Cf. 72, 73, 101, 129, 130, and 143).*

113. For Poison Ivy, squeeze nightshade leaves and mix with sweet cream. (P.A.)

*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 276; Indiana: Richmond, p. 130. See also Ruth Ann Musick, "West Virginia Folklore," HF, VII (1948), p. 4.*

114. When you get a chest cold, you fry onions, put them in a cloth and put it on your chest. (O.J.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 50\*. Fried onions are also used in Indiana for lung fever (Richmond, p. 128) and pneumonia (Richmond, p. 130).*

115. If you have a congestive chill, fry onions and apply them hot to your chest. (C.M.)

*Alabama: (bronchial troubles) Browne, p. 43.*

116. To stop bleeding: get a puff ball that has burst or is ready to burst and put it on the wound and bind it on. (R.D.)

*Cf. 93 and 118.*

117. It's bad luck to burn a sassafras stick in the house. (C.M.)

*General: Ferm, p. 196; Illinois: Hyatt, pp. 56, 593; Indiana: Brewster (1943), p. 27; Kentucky: Thomas, p. 226; Maryland: Whitney, p. 9; South: Puckett, p. 420; Tennessee: Frazier, p. 8. The informant commented that the superstition probably arose because burning sassafras wood emits great numbers of sparks, an explanation which is similar to one noted by Puckett (p. 421).*

118. Put a big chew of tobacco on the wound to stop the bleeding. (R.D.)

*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 222. (Cf. 93, 116).*

119. For Croup: Take lard or butter or shortening and put it on a rag. Then put some fine cut tobacco (e.g. from a cigarette) and sprinkle on the larded cloth. Put the cloth on the chest and then put a warm cloth on top to drive it in. (P.A.)

*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 210.*

120. Take a fourth of a teaspoonful of pulverized yellow root in a glass of water for stomach trouble including ulcers or for a sore throat. (J.L.)

*Alabama: (ulcerated stomach) Browne, p. 111\*; (sore throat) p. 99\*.*

#### *Household / Farm*

121. It's bad luck to sharpen an axe in the house (L.C.)

*Alabama: (to bring an ax into the house) Browne, p. 146\*.*

122. Put a sharp knife or axe under the bed of a woman in labor to cut the pain in two. (C.M.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 9\*.*

123. Never move your broom. If you move, leave your broom behind. Don't take it because it's bad luck. (M.S.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 130\*. Only the injunction was initially collected. The elaboration was elicited by the collector's further questioning.*

124. Never step over a broom, it's bad luck. (J.L.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 141\*. The counteractant is the traditional undoing of the deed, in this case stepping back over the broom (Browne, p. 141\*). It is interesting that, according to Thomas (p. 282), a witch cannot step over a broom. This leads to a simple witch test such that anyone who refuses to step over a broom is a witch (Puckett, p. 156). Combining this with the Brown County superstition, one would have to risk the bad luck incurred by stepping over a broom in order to prove that one was not a witch.*

125. It's bad luck to sweep under a sick person's bed. (M.S.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 140\*, (sick person will die), p. 186\*. Puckett cites a version which emphasizes the causal nature of this superstition (p. 398): Never sweep under a sick man's bed unless you just want him to die.*

126. Never let anyone sweep under your feet because you'll never get married. (M.S.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 182\*. Kentucky versions (Thomas, p. 58) indicate a double danger: "If anyone sweeps under you, you will never be married" and "If you sweep under anyone, you will never be married."*

127. Never sweep dirt out of the door; you'll sweep away your riches. (J.L.)

*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 402; New York: Gardner, p. 290. In one version the sweeping is unprofitable specifically on New Year's Day (Browne, p. 167\*) and in others, sweeping away dirt causes bad luck (Browne, p. 140\*).*

128. If the butter is slow in coming, put a dime in the churn especially during Elderberry blossom time. (C.M.)

*Kentucky: Thomas, p. 280; New York: Gardner, p. 273. Traditionally this superstition has to do with counteracting the effect of witches who have bewitched the cream. Thus in many versions, it is stated that the dime is placed in the churn to drive out the witch (Farr, p. 15; Randolph, pp. 294-295; Thomas, p. 280). Another technique consists of dropping a hot horseshoe into the churn (Browne, p. 198\*). As for the reference to Elderberry blossom time, it is interesting to note a superstition from Kentucky (Thomas, p. 139): "You cannot make butter when elders are in bloom."*

129. You take a greasy dishrag, rub it over the warts, and then hide the rag under a rock and don't let the person who has the warts see where the rag is hidden. The warts will go away (D.G., H.G.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 113\*. (Cf. 55, 72, 101, 112, 130, and 143).*

130. You can take a dishrag and secretly bury it and the wart will go away. (J.D.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 113\*. It is noteworthy that the dishrag apparently need not be in actual contact with the warts.*

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131. If you carry a hoe through the house, someone in the family will die. (J.D.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 194\*.*

132. If you take a hoe into a house, it's bad luck. (D.G., L.C.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 146\*. For a counteractant, see superstition 207 in Category Three.*

133. Carrying a hoe through a house is bad luck. You'll lose more than you'll make. (P.E.)

134. It's good luck to hang a horseshoe over your door. (J.D.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 228\*. Traditionally the horseshoe was hung over the door to keep away witches (Browne, p. 198; Gardner, p. 272; Puckett, p. 158; Randolph, p. 283) and evil spirits (Dresslar, p. 69; Puckett, p. 477). (Cf. 44).*

135. If you walk under a ladder, it's bad luck. (J.D., D.G.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 147\*. A counteractant reported by Hyatt (p. 376) consists of turning around and walking back under the ladder in the opposite direction.*

136. If someone dies in the family, you cover the looking glass because if not covered, someone else will look in the glass, and somebody in the family will die. (O.J.)

*Kentucky: Thomas, p. 172; Ozarks: Randolph, p. 312; South: Puckett, p. 81.*

137. If a mirror is in the room with the corpse, you cover it up so that you can't see the corpse in the mirror. If you do see the corpse in the mirror, someone in the family will die in the year. (J.L.)

*Gardner (p. 295, n. 232) remarks that either seeing the corpse's reflection or one's own reflection portends death. Some versions of the superstition do not specify the danger involved in an uncovered mirror but state merely that the mirror should be covered to prevent another death in the family (Browne, p. 187\*). It is important to distinguish this kind of simple preventive Category Two superstition from a Category Three counteractant. Category Three counteractants refer to actions taken after a sign or magic superstition has occurred. Thus action taken, for example, after someone had looked into the deathroom mirror would constitute a Category Three counteractant.*

138. If you break a mirror, you'll have seven years bad luck. (R.M., D.G., L.C.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 133\*. The bad luck can be avoided through such Category Three superstitions as throwing the pieces of glass into a river or running water (Hyatt, p. 379; Puckett, p. 442; Thomas, p. 171) or burying the fragments at the foot of a green tree (Puckett, p. 442) among others.*

139. If you let a rocking chair rock after you've gotten out of it, it's a sign of bad luck. (D.G., C.M.)

*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 377; Indiana: Brewster (1936), p. 367. This superstition is distinct from that of rocking an unoccupied rocking chair (Browne, p. 132\*) and from that in which an unoccupied rocking chair begins to rock by itself (Hyatt, p. 377). (Cf. 57).*

140. If you put salt on a red bird's tail, you can catch him. (V.G.)  
*Apparently salt may be similarly employed to catch any bird (Dresslar, p. 27; Frazier, p. 15; Hyatt, p. 66) or even a rabbit (Hyatt, p. 84). (Cf. 218).*

141. Don't ever return borrowed salt, it's bad luck. (V.G.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 145\*. It is also bad luck to borrow salt and to loan salt (Browne, p. 145\*). For an extremely stimulating study of salt superstitions, see Ernest Jones, "The Symbolic Significance of Salt in Folklore and Superstition," Essays in Applied Psycho-Analysis, Vol. II, "Essays in Folklore, Anthropology and Religion" (London, 1951), pp. 22-109. (Cf. 208).*

142. Take a straw and put two fingers at the top (thumb and forefinger) saying "he loves me." Then put two fingers of the other hand under the first two fingers saying "he loves me not," and so on down to the end of the straw. (D.G.)  
*The informant claimed that unlike the daisy (Cf. 102) system, the straw technique will come out right if one starts with "he loves me." For a discussion of this superstition, see Richard M. Dorson, American Folklore (Chicago, 1959), p. 264 and J. W. Ashton, "The Vitality of American Folklore," HF, VI (1947), p. 87.*

143. You can tie a string around a wart and you take the string and hide it and don't tell anyone where it is. The wart will disappear. (J.D.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 115\*. (Cf. 72, 73, 101, 112, 129, and 130).*

144. Tie a yarn string around your waist to cure shingles. (J.L.)

145. If you tie a string around your legs below the knee, it's good for leg cramp. (C.M.)  
*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 255; Indiana: Richmond, p. 125; Kentucky: Thomas, pp. 101, 131.*

146. When a woman is in a family way, a teaspoonful of sugar with all the turpentine it can soak up will cause her to come around. (\*\*)  
*Ozarks: (large doses of turpentine) Randolph, p. 194; South: (a teaspoon of turpentine each morning for nine mornings) Puckett, p. 332. Turpentine is also used as a contraceptive (Hyatt, p. 109) and to facilitate birth (Browne, p. 10\*). Turpentine and sugar are recommended as a means of inducing the menstrual flow (Hyatt, p. 250).*

147. Never raise an umbrella in a house or you'll have bad luck.  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 147\*. Raising an umbrella inside a house also signifies death (Browne, p. 186\*) or that the person carrying the umbrella will never get married (Browne, p. 183\*). In other versions, opening an umbrella indoors will bring on rain (Hyatt, p. 29) but in an interesting counteractant reported by Dresslar (p. 63) if one can quickly thrust the umbrella out the window, the rain may be warded off. This would be an example of a Category Three superstition arising from a Category Two superstition.*

#### *Human Body and Behavior*

148. Old Daniel Sipes could stop blood and he could cure thrush by blowing in the mouths of the kids. (W.L.)

*Alabama: (blood stopping by conjuring) Browne, p. 34\*; (cure of thrush by blowing in mouth) p. 28\*. For Indiana bloodstoppers, see*

Brewster (1936), p. 365; Brewster (1939), p. 43; and Richmond, p. 119. For additional bloodstoppers, see Richard M. Dorson, Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers: Folk Traditions of the Upper Peninsula (Cambridge, 1952), pp. 150-165.

149. If a person was the seventh son of the family, he could cure the thrush by blowing in the patient's mouth. (C.M.)

Alabama: Browne, p. 28\*.

150. A child who never saw his father could cure the thrush by blowing his breath into their (the patients') mouths. (L.C., J.L.)

Alabama: Browne, p. 28\*.

151. My mother used to take a baby with thrush to the barn and hold the child over the manure pile and let it steam up. She said the three highest words in the Bible: By the help of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. (With regard to this secret formula) A woman can tell a man but not another woman and a man could tell a woman but not another man. (R.L.)

*The informant was not certain of the wording of the formula. This superstition has been previously collected in Indiana (Brewster (1939), p. 40): ". . . she took her to the said old lady, who removed the top from some manure, held the child over it to breathe the steam, and muttered a few words . . ." The use of a Biblical formula for the cure of thrush is not unusual (Browne, p. 28) and the alternation of sex in the passing on of the secret charm is likewise common (Brewster (1936), p. 364; Richmond, pp. 116, 119). In fact, Halpert (p. 8) has much the same verbiage: "A woman cannot tell a woman or a man cannot tell a man what this verse is."*

152. If a woman is pregnant, she should not be around butchering or it'll mark the child. (L.C., C.M.)

Illinois: Hyatt, p. 114. (Cf. 88).

153. A woman with child should not see a corpse, 'cause it'll mark the child. (C.M.)

Ozarks: Randolph, p. 197.

154. Count off the buttons to tell who you're going to marry: Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief; doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief. (L.C.)

*General: Ferm, p. 96; Illinois: Hyatt, p. 360; Indiana: Brewster (1943), p. 32; Kentucky: Thomas, p. 28. In some cases, this technique may be used to determine one's own profession (Busse, p. 26). In another version, daisy petals may be pulled off instead of counting buttons (Gardner, p. 276).*

155. If you cross the fingers (second and third) on one hand, it's good luck. If you cross the fingers of both hands, you'll have bad luck. (D.G.)

*Crossing one's fingers is generally a means of insuring good luck (Browne, p. 125; Hyatt, p. 160).*

156. If a person wears the clothes of a dead person, he'll soon die. (R.M.)

Kentucky: Thomas, p. 70; South: Puckett, pp. 98-99.

157. To kill your spouse, scrape off the mercury from the back of a looking glass and give it to your spouse in milk, coffee, or food. (C.M.)

158. The person who eats the last piece of cake will be an old maid. (M.S.)

Alabama: Browne, p. 182\*. *In a conflicting superstition, the person who takes the last piece is assured of acquiring a desirable spouse (Gardner, p. 293; Hyatt, pp. 360, 362; Thomas, p. 49).*

159. They'll kiss you if you get the last piece of pie or cake on a plate. (J.L.)

*In a similar, though not identical, superstition, the person who takes the last of anything from the plate has to kiss the cook (Browne, p. 134\*). In the Ozarks (Randolph, p. 182) the practice varies with the sex involved. If a woman takes the last biscuit, she will be an old maid but if a man takes the last biscuit, it is jokingly said that he will soon kiss the cook.*

160. You take the child out to a tree and you drill a small hole, about a quarter of an inch, just over his head. Cut off a lock of his hair, put it in the hole and seal up the hole. When the child grows up above the hole, he'll lose his asthma. (R.L.)

*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 216; Indiana: Brewster (1936), p. 362; Richmond, p. 122; Kentucky: Thomas, pp. 93-94; Maryland: Whitney, p. 86; New York: Gardner, p. 263; South: Puckett, p. 370. This is a common cure for a number of illnesses including croup (Browne, p. 19\*), phthisic (Brewster (1939), p. 37; Thomas, p. 110), fits (Brewster (1939), p. 36), tuberculosis (Thomas, p. 100), thrush (Thomas, p. 117), stammering (Gardner, p. 270), and chills (Puckett, p. 364). It is also a means of causing someone to lose his mind (Hyatt, p. 466) and a similar technique is employed to cause someone to become constipated (Puckett, p. 255).*

161. If you have an ache, such as a side ache, spit on a rock, turn this side of the rock towards the ground and stomp on it so it's wedged a little in the ground, and the ache will go away. (J.D.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 84\*. A Kentucky version (Thomas, p. 114) includes a verbal formula: "Pain, get off my side; pain, get off my side."*

162. If you'll not put your tongue in where you pulled a tooth out, a gold one will come in. (J.L., L.C.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 110\*. A curious variant collected by Hyatt (p. 147) expresses a different attitude: Keep your tongue out of the hole left by the extraction of a tooth to prevent a gold tooth from growing there.*

163. If as a child you have a tooth pulled, if you put your tongue where it was, you'll get a horse tooth. (J.D.)

*It is interesting to compare the uses of reward (Cf. 162) and punishment to encourage children to keep their tongues away from tooth holes.*

164. If you throw the tooth (which has just been extracted) down and a dog steps on it, you'll have a dog's tooth. (L.C.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 109\*. According to a Kentucky superstition (Thomas, p. 80), whatever animal finds one's tooth determines the kind of animal tooth resulting.*

165. If you do it with a virgin, she won't get with child the first time. (\*\*)

166. If you have the clap, do it with a virgin and you'll be cured. (\*\*)

*Some forms of superstitious belief and practice can have serious consequences. See Glenn Matthew White, "The Truth About Illegitimacy," Ladies Home Journal (December, 1960), p. 102, where this superstition is cited.*

167. To tell the depth of a well, you use a glass and a thimble with thread tied around it. (The glass is placed on the site of the prospective well.) Suspending the thimble in the glass, the number of times the thimble strikes the side of the glass indicates the number of feet the well is deep. (P.E.)

*The informant claimed to be a water witch. However, although he used a conventional forked stick (peach tree), he had the above method for ascertaining the depth of the water. Actually, the use of the thimble suspended in a glass for purposes of divination is well established. It can indicate among other things: the number of children one will have (Hyatt, p. 108), the number of years until marriage (Hyatt, p. 342; Thomas, p. 53), and the age of a horse (Gardner, p. 257).*

168. Married in blue

He will always be true. (M.S.)

If you get married in green,

You'll be ashamed to be seen. (J.L.)

If you get married in white,

You'll be chosen right. (J.L.)

If you get married in red,

You'll wish you was dead. (J.L.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 179\*. Gardner (p. 301-302) and Thomas (p. 64) both mention ten colors while Hyatt (p. 366) notes twelve. Usually the rhyme with "white" is: "You have chosen all right."*

169. If you get a snake bite, put your arm or leg in a mudhole and drink whiskey, the more the better. (C.M.)

*Both mud (Hyatt, p. 218; Pound, p. 29) and whiskey (Browne, p. 96\*) are common snake bite remedies. That superstition phraseology is often as traditional as the condition(s) and result(s) of superstitions may be seen by noting the wording of the Nebraska whiskey cure cited by Pound (p. 29): "Drink all the whiskey you can, the more the better."*

170. The first time you sleep in a strange room, you make a wish in every corner and the first corner you see when you wake up, that wish will come true. (M.S.)

*Although one exact parallel was found (Dresslar, p. 120), most of the superstitions of this type are divinatory. Usually the four corners of the room (Browne, p. 175\*) or the four bed posts (Hyatt, p. 346; Thomas, p. 26) are named. Then either the first corner seen or first bed post touched in the morning reveals the name of one's future mate (Busse, p. 21; Brewster [1943], p. 32).*

### CATEGORY III

#### Celestial / Temporal

171. First star you see in the night, you can make a wish. (L.C., J.D., D.G.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 203\*.*

172. You can make a wish on a falling star. (R.D.)

*General: Ferm, pp. 202, 212; Illinois: Hyatt, p. 323; Kentucky: Thomas, p. 19. (Cf. 13).*

173. If you see a falling star, you can make a wish and it'll come true if you say: "Star light, star bright, first star I see tonight; I wish I may, I wish I might have the wish I wish tonight." (R.M.)

*Although this rhyme is most commonly used upon sighting the first star of the evening (Browne, p. 203\*), it has also been reported in connection with shooting stars (Hyatt, pp. 323-324).*

174. If you come out after the stars are out, and you look at a star and make a wish for seven nights in a row, the wish'll come true. (D.G.)

*There are numerous superstitions in which one counts seven stars for seven successive nights. The result is usually either one's being able to make a wish (Hyatt, p. 324) or one's dreaming of his future mate (Browne, p. 176\*).*

175. You can take a cow, or mare, or woman and if she's got pregnant in the first part of the moon, she will deliver the baby in the first part of the moon. If they get pregnant in the dark of the moon, they will deliver in the dark of the moon. (P.E.)

*Cf. 10.*

176. If you butcher a hog in the light of the moon, the meat will go to grease and curl up. (O. J.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 137\*. Some superstitions have the same results from butchering hogs in the dark of the moon (Thomas, p. 179). There is apparently no agreement as to whether to butcher hogs in the light or dark of the moon (Browne, p. 137\*). (Cf. 190).*

177. Never fool with bees in the light of the moon because they are too frisky. In the dark of the moon, they're lazy, not a-working, and you can work with them. (P.E.)

*Cf. 91.*

178. Plant all root crops in the dark of the moon else they'll grow to top. (R.M.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 244\*. A previously collected superstition from southern Indiana contends that root vegetables should be planted in the light of the moon (Busse, p. 17).*

179. Plant all crops that grow above ground in the light of the moon. (R.M.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 244\*. For a warning against this practice, see Browne, p. 248\*.*

180. If you plant potatoes in the dark part of the moon, you'll have potatoes. (P.E.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 247\*. Although this is by far the more common counsel, there are still versions which recommend planting potatoes in the light of the moon (Hyatt, p. 45).*

181. Never plant no potatoes in the first part of the moon because they'll all go to vines. (P.E.)

182. Plant potatoes on Good Friday which is in the dark of the moon. (R.M.)

183. Plant potatoes on Good Friday for a good crop. (J.D.)

*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 46; Maryland: Whitney, p. 116; West Virginia: Engelke, p. 66. Good Friday is apparently a propitious time for the planting of any crop (Browne, p. 246\*).*

184. Plant your potatoes in the ground and not in the moon. (M.S.)  
*Hyatt (p. 32) in an explanatory note makes the following comment: "The ancient and perennial witticism of the farmer, who does not plant according to the different phases of the moon, runs something like this: 'I don't plant in the moon, I plant in the ground.'*

185. You want to pick apples or dig potatoes in the light of the moon so they won't rot. If you pick apples or dig potatoes in the dark of the moon, they'll rot. (J.L.)  
*Illinois: Hyatt, pp. 48, 49; Indiana: Busse, p. 18; Kentucky: Thomas, p. 177; Ozarks: Randolph, p. 35.*

186. If you make kraut in the dark moon, the brine sinks on it and it (the kraut) will turn black. (J.L.)  
*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 398; Maryland: Whitney, p. 58; Ozarks: Randolph, p. 65; Tennessee: Farr, p. 12.*

187. If you lay a board on the ground in the dark of the moon, the grass'll die under it. (R.L.)  
*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 35; Kentucky: Thomas, p. 181.*  
 188. If you lay a board down in the light of the moon, it'll cup up and the grass will grow under it. (R.L., O.J.)  
*Kentucky: Thomas, p. 181. The practical application of this superstition occurs in reference to shingling a roof. A board nailed on a roof in the light of the moon will cup up (Frazier, p. 15) and shingles will crimp or warp (Hyatt, p. 374; Busse, p. 18; Puckett, p. 349; Thomas, p. 181).*

189. Set your fence posts in the dark of the moon so they'll stay in. (C.M.)  
*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 374. Curiously enough, there is agreement on the general effect of laying a fence in the dark of the moon but there is disagreement as to the degree of the effect and consequently as to the practice to be followed. One set of superstitions recommends laying the fence in the light of the moon because if laid in the dark of the moon, the fence will sink into the ground and rot (Dresslar, p. 19; Hyatt, pp. 374-375; Thomas, p. 181). The same power of the dark of the moon is utilized in the practice of manuring fields in the dark of the moon. If the fields are manured in the light of the moon, the manure will stay on top of the ground (Brewster [1943], p. 26).*

190. Never butcher a hog or beef when the sign is in the legs. If you do, the meat will swell up all over. The best time to butcher hogs is when the sign is in the thighs. This holds for killing chickens too. (P.E.)  
*For other suggestions as to the proper signs for butchering hogs, see Hyatt, p. 97 and Thomas, p. 179. (Cf. 176).*

191. If you plant corn in the sign of the knees (about 10 May), you get good corn. (J.L.)  
*Alabama: (arms) Browne, p. 249\*. It was the informant who noted that the approximate date for planting was the tenth of May.*

192. For full developed corn, plant when the zodiac sign is in the heart. (P.E.)

193. If you plant corn in the sign of the head, it'll all go to fodder. (R.L.)

194. If you plant beans in the sign of the arms, you'll get good beans. (J.L.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 249\*.*

195. Cucumbers should be planted in the sign of the arms. (J.L.)  
*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 42. Cucumbers are often planted in the sign of the twins (Browne, p. 250\*).*

196. If you deaden a tree in dog days, it'll never sprout. (R.D.)  
*There are many strange phenomena which may occur during dog days. Sores won't heal (Browne, p. 97) and it is dangerous to go swimming (Randolph, p. 142) and apparently to pick catnip (Gardner, p. 298). (Cf. 68).*

197. Friday begun will never be done. (R.D.)  
*Alabama: Browne, pp. 142\*, 164\*.*

198. It's bad luck to sew on Sunday. For every stitch you sew on Sunday you have to rip out nine in hell. (C.M.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 142\*. Other consequences include the devil's taking nine stitches in one's eyelids (Hyatt, p. 174), picking out the stitches with one's nose (Thomas, pp. 207-208), or pulling them out with one's teeth (Browne, p. 142). The Brown County version may be compared with the proverb: 'a stitch in time saves nine' in that both include an opposition between one and nine stitches.*

199. Never cut your fingernails on Sunday. (J.L.)  
*Alabama: (bad luck) Browne, p. 125\*. Specific results of this practice include having a plague (Thomas, p. 207) and being caught by the devil (Brewster (1943), p. 35). On the other hand, cutting one's nails for nine Sundays will result in one's marrying whom he desires (Thomas, p. 47).*

200. You take a mirror out to a well on a certain night and you'll see the face of the person you're going to marry. An old maid will see a coffin in the mirror. (R.D.)  
*Alabama: Browne, pp. 169\*, 174\*, 186\*. Although the informant thought the certain night might have been Halloween, in tradition it is usually the first of May.*

201. You go out on May the first and get a snail and place that snail on a shoebox lid and place it under your bed and the next morning, the name of the person you're going to marry will be spelled out. (R.D.)  
*Alabama: (name) Browne, p. 169\*; (initials), p. 174\*.*

#### *Animals*

202. In the spring the first mourning dove you hear cooing, take off one of your stockings or socks, turn it wrongside out and in the heel will be a hair, the color of the hair of the person you're going to marry. (R.D.)  
*Illinois: Hyatt, pp. 347-348; Indiana: Brewster (1943), p. 31; Kentucky: Thomas, p. 36; Ozarks: Randolph, p. 333; South: Puckett, p. 326. Occasionally other birds provide the proper sign. These include the robin (Hyatt, p. 355) and the whippoorwill (Brewster [1943], p. 33). In addition, there are other means of finding a hair the color of one's future spouse's hair (Browne, pp. 174\*, 175\*). (Cf. 19, 20, 78).*

203. It's a sign to plant corn when the whippoorwill hollers. (C.M., R.D.)  
*Alabama: Browne, p. 246\*. (Cf. 21).*

*Plants*

204. It's time to plant corn when oak leaves are the size of squirrel ears. (R.M.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 247\*. The measurement standards vary. In different versions, a tree's leaves must be the size of a squirrel's foot (Engelke, p. 67), guinea's foot (Brewster (1943), p. 24), mouse's ear (Gardner, p. 297), or a rabbit's ear (Dresslar, p. 15).*

205. Be ready to plant corn when the hickory leaves are the size of squirrel's ears. (R.D.)

*Just as the size of the leaves varies in different versions, so also does the kind of tree. The kinds of trees besides oak and hickory include elm (Browne, p. 247\*), beech (Gardner, p. 297), and maple (Brewster (1943), p. 24).*

206. The time to plant corn is when the dogwood tree is in blossom. (R.M.)

*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 52; Kentucky: Thomas, p. 220; West Virginia: Engelke, p. 66. The blooming of the dogwood is also known as a sign of spring (Browne, p. 241\*).*

*Household / Farm*

207. To bring a hoe in the house is bad luck unless you back out the same door you came in. (M.S.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 147\*. (Cf. 131, 132, 133).*

208. It's bad luck if you spill salt unless you throw some of it over your left shoulder. (M.S.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 146\*. Another neutralizing counteractant involves throwing some of the spilled salt into fire (Hyatt, p. 386; Puckett, p. 442). However, burning salt is also supposed to be unlucky (Hyatt, p. 387). A positive counteractant consists of making a wish while throwing some of the spilled salt over the right shoulder (Hyatt, p. 321). It is interesting to note once again how a bad omen is converted into constructive magic through wishing, in conjunction with a change of shoulder in accordance with traditional left / right symbolism. (Cf. 141).*

*Human Body and Behavior*

209. It's bad luck to tell your dream before breakfast. (J.L.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 253\*.*

210. If you tell your dream before breakfast, it'll come true. (J.L., L.C.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 253\*.*

211. If you tell your dream before breakfast, it won't come true. (M.S.)

*General: Dresslar, p. 133; South: (before sunrise) Puckett, p. 496.*

212. If you start to leave and forget something and return to get it, it's bad luck unless you sit down. (M.S.)

*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 417; Indiana: Brewster (1936), p. 368; (1943), p. 26; Busse, p. 19; Kentucky: Thomas, p. 231.*

213. If you start out someplace and forget something, it's bad luck to go back to get or do it unless you sit on the house's doorstep and count to ten. (L.C.)

*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 418; Kentucky: Thomas, p. 231; Maryland: Whitney, p. 62; New York: Gardner, p. 300. For other counteractants*

*to the bad luck ensuing from forgetting and retracing one's steps, see Browne (p. 154\*) and especially Hyatt (pp. 416-418) who lists more than forty.*

214. If you start anywhere and have to turn back, you sit down and make a wish and they say it'll come true. (J.L.)

*Kentucky: Thomas, p. 24; Ozarks: Randolph, p. 59. This is another example of how an original situation causing bad luck is turned to advantage. It makes use of the common conversion factor of wishing.*

215. If you drop a comb, step on it, make a wish and don't say a word until someone asks you a question. (V.G.)

*Illinois: Hyatt, p. 316; Kentucky: Thomas, p. 24; Ozarks: Randolph, p. 335. This is an example of the conversion of a sign superstition (Cf. 56) into a superstition involving human controlled destiny. Again the conversion is achieved through wishing.*

216. If a girl gets up and her skirt tail or dress turns up, she can make a wish. (D.G.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 149\*. The understanding that the wish made will come true makes this superstition a Category Three superstition instead of a Category One superstition. However, variants of this superstition in which the turned up hem indicates that one's lover is in a saloon (Hyatt, p. 328) or that a person's sweetheart is thinking of him (Thomas, p. 55) are strictly sign superstitions and accordingly belong in Category One.*

217. If two people say the same thing at the same time, they hook little fingers and each makes a wish. (D.G., J.D.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 255\*.*

218. If you see a red bird, you can make a wish. (L.C., R.M.)

*Alabama: Browne, p. 225\*. Again the fact that a person can, acting after an initial sign, produce a result through his own efforts (i.e. wishing) places this superstition in Category Three. In cases where the sight of a red bird is simply a sign of meeting a stranger (Browne, p. 156\*) or of good luck (Hyatt, p. 60), such superstitions belong clearly to Category One.*

219. In order not to hex yourself, knock on wood. (C.M.)

*General: Dresslar, pp. 96, 136; Ferm, pp. 29, 131; Illinois: Hyatt, p. 150; Indiana: Brewster (1943), p. 36; Busse, p. 20; Kentucky: Thomas, pp. 225, 289. What makes this superstition a Category Three conversion superstition and not a Category Two magic preventive superstition is the fact that one knocks on wood after having committed the potentially dangerous action involving hubris of either boasting of good fortune or immunity to disease, etc.*

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *The Myths and Fables of To-Day* (Boston, 1900), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> James G. Frazer, *The Devil's Advocate: A Plea for Superstition* (London, 1927), p. 166; Edward B. Tylor, *The Origins of Culture* (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1958), p. 72.

<sup>3</sup> Harry M. Hyatt, *Folk-Lore from Adams County, Illinois*, Memoirs of the Alma Egan Hyatt Foundation (New York, 1935), pp. 432-434.

<sup>4</sup> *The Science of Folklore* (London, 1930), p. 203.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204.

<sup>6</sup> David Bidney, *Theoretical Anthropology* (New York, 1953), p. 294.

<sup>7</sup> Bidney is, of course, well aware of this distinction. In fact it is to his enlightening discussion of Malinowski's identification of social function with historical origin (*Theoretical Anthropology*, pp. 226-230) that I owe my awareness of the theoretical problem involved.

<sup>8</sup> Newbell N. Puckett, *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro* (Chapel Hill, 1926), p. 571.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 513-514.

<sup>10</sup> W. Edson Richmond and Elva Van Winkle, "Is There a Doctor in the House?" *Indiana History Bulletin*, XXXV, No. 9 (September, 1958), 115.

<sup>11</sup> Puckett, *op. cit.*, p. 312.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 312.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 312.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 312, 439.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 577.

<sup>16</sup> Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *Primitives and the Supernatural*, trans. Lilian A. Clare (London, 1936), p. 47.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>18</sup> W. R. Halliday, *Greek Divination* (London, 1913), p. 375.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>20</sup> Violetta Halpert, in her illuminating article "Folk Cures from Indiana," *HF*, IX (1950), 1-12, commented upon the magical nature of cures. In her tripartite classification of cures, she noted (p. 12) that "in the physical cures, the power of the cure lies in the substance itself; in the physio-magical group, in the procedure for the curative use of the object; in the magical group, in the healer." Halpert errs in not seeing all portions of her classification as magical because actually her classification scheme represents an isolation of three important elements of magic ritual: a magic object, a procedure, and the personal power of the magician. (The three element analysis of magic ritual was suggested by Professor David Bidney.)

<sup>21</sup> Puckett, *op. cit.*, p. 484.

<sup>22</sup> The following works were consulted for purposes of annotation:

Brewster, Paul G., "Specimens of Folklore from Southern Indiana," *Folk-Lore*, XLVII (1936), 362-368.

Brewster, Paul G., "Folk Cures and Preventives from Southern Indiana," *SFQ*, III (1939), 33-43.

Brewster, Paul G., "Folk Beliefs and Practices from Southern Indiana," *HFB*, II (1943), 23-38.

Brewster, Paul G. "Beliefs and Customs," *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*, II (Durham, 1952), 223-282.

Browne, Ray B. *Popular Beliefs and Practices from Alabama*, University of California Publications Folklore Studies, No. 9 (Berkeley, 1958).

Busse, Ora S. "Indiana Folk Beliefs, Omens, and Signs," *HF*, VI (1947), 14-26.

Dresslar, Fletcher Bascom, *Superstitions and Education*, University of California Publications in Education, V (Berkeley, 1907), 1-239.

Engelke, Nellie, "Superstitions," *West Virginia Folklore*, X (1960), 63-65.

Farr, T. J., "Tennessee Superstitions and Beliefs," *TFSB*, I, No. 2 (1935), 1-16.

Ferm, Vergilius, *A Brief Dictionary of American Superstitions* (New York, 1959).

Frazier, Neal, "A Collection of Middle Tennessee Superstitions," *TFSB*, II, No. 4 (1936), 1-16.

Gardner, Emelyn Elizabeth, *Folklore from the Schoharie Hills*, New York (Ann Arbor, 1937).

Halpert, Violetta, "Folk Cures from Indiana," *HF*, IX (1950), 1-12.  
 Hyatt, Harry Middleton, *Folk-Lore from Adams County Illinois*, Memoirs of the Alma Egan Hyatt Foundation (New York, 1935).  
 Pound, Louise, *Nebraska Folklore* (Lincoln, 1959).  
 Puckett, Newbell Niles, *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro* (Chapel Hill, 1926).  
 Randolph, Vance, *Ozark Superstitions* (New York, 1947).  
 Richmond, W. Edson and Elva Van Winkle, "Is There a Doctor in the House?" *Indiana History Bulletin*, XXXV, No. 9 (September 1958), 115-135.  
 Thomas, Daniel L. and Lucy B. Thomas, *Kentucky Superstitions* (Princeton, 1920).  
 Whitney, Annie Weston and Caroline Canfield Bullock, *Folk-Lore from Maryland*, MAFS, XVIII (New York, 1925).

<sup>23</sup> The size of this collection does not warrant detailed sketches of the informants. The following minimum information includes each informant's name, address, age, and occupation:

P.A. Pauline Anthony, Route 2, Nashville, Indiana. Age 61. Housewife.  
 L.C. Lois Carter (Mrs. Dean Carter), Route 2, Nashville, Indiana. Age 35. Housewife. Daughter of Raleigh Deckard.  
 J.D. Janet Deckard, Route 2, Nashville, Indiana. Age 16. Student.  
 R.D. Raleigh Deckard, Route 3, Bloomington, Indiana. Age 70. Retired school teacher from Elkinsville, Indiana.  
 P.E. Paul Ennis, Nashville, Indiana. Age 59. House painter.  
 C.G. Charley Graham, Route 2, Nashville, Indiana. Age 16. Factory worker. Son of Harold and Verlis Graham.  
 D.G. Donna Graham, Route 2, Nashville, Indiana. Age 13. Student. Daughter of Harold and Verlis Graham.  
 H.G. Harold Graham, Route 2, Nashville, Indiana. Age 40. Factory worker.  
 V.G. Verlis Graham (Mrs. Harold Graham), Route 2, Nashville, Indiana. Age 35. Housewife.  
 O.J. Otto Jones, 1219 Crescent Road, Bloomington, Indiana. Age 74. Retired school teacher who taught in many Brown County public schools.  
 J.L. Jesse Lawson (Mrs. Riley Lawson), 2511 West 3rd Street, Bloomington, Indiana. Age 69. Housewife. Native of Elkinsville, Indiana.  
 R.L. Riley Lawson, 2511 West 3rd Street, Bloomington, Indiana. Age 76. Retired carpenter and farmer. Native of Elkinsville, Indiana.  
 W.L. Wilbur Lucas, Route 2, Nashville, Indiana. Age 41. Factory worker.  
 C.M. Charlotte Mathis (Mrs. Ray Mathis), 1924 East 2nd Street, Bloomington, Indiana. Age 58. Personnel Department Indiana University. Native of Elkinsville, Indiana.  
 R.M. Ray Mathis, 1924 East 2nd Street, Bloomington, Indiana. Age 60. Retired school teacher from Brown County. Wrote M.A. thesis on the History of Brown County.  
 M.S. Marie Schweer, 803 South Washington, Bloomington, Indiana. Age 69. Receptionist at a girls' dormitory at Indiana University. Native of Elkinsville, Indiana.  
 W.S. William Stogdill, Rural Route 2, Norman, Indiana. Age 35. Farmhand. Native of Elkinsville, Indiana.

\*\* Name withheld at informant's request. She is a former resident of Brown County.

FRANK A. HOFFMANN  
*Indiana University*  
*Bloomington, Indiana*

## PLACE NAMES IN BROWN COUNTY

DESPITE ITS POTENTIALITIES as a rich source of information about local customs, speech, anecdotes, unique events, and local history, comparatively little has been done in the way of recording place names from a folklorist's point of view. A few states—New York, Maine, Pennsylvania, California, Texas—can boast of a number of good state-wide or local collections, but most areas of the country have been barely touched. Although Indiana has done slightly better than most states in the number of published place name items, the material is scanty indeed.

Charles Haywood's *Bibliography of North American Folklore and Folksong* lists only five items. Two of these—Jacob Dunn's *True Indian Stories* (Indianapolis, 1908) and E. Guernsey's *Indiana: The Influence of the Indians Upon Its History* (Indianapolis, 1933)—only incidentally note Indiana place names. A third item, a brief article by Horace Ellis entitled, "Indiana's Map of Patriots," *National Republican*, Volume XX (1932), is concerned only with place names selected because of the popularity of famous men. The last two items, both articles by Paul Brewster—"A Glance At Some Indiana Place Names," *Hoosier Folklore Bulletin*, Volume II (1943); and "Additional Observations On Indiana Place Names," *Hoosier Folklore Bulletin*, Volume III (1944)—are merely listings of place names, with no indication of specific origins or meanings. The first article has some slight merit in that it groups the names into categories—men's names, women's names, Biblical names, Indian names, and the

like—but rather than an end product, this should be only the first step in the direction of a more thorough investigation into origins and the traditional meanings surrounding many of the names.

Does this paucity of published material mean that Indiana has little to offer in the way of unique or colorful place names? Mr. Brewster begins his first article with the statement, "Indiana is not particularly rich in unusual or striking place names."<sup>1</sup> Somehow I have the feeling that Mr. Brewster never really studied the map of Indiana or thought much about some of the names on the list that he compiled. For instance, he classifies Bean Blossom, in Brown County, under "Names of Animals, Plants, and Minerals,"<sup>2</sup> seemingly implying that the name was derived from a plant. This may very well be the case, and I'm sure that many people in the Bean Blossom area assume that it is so. However, as I shall point out a little later, not everyone accepts this explanation.

I have divided the place names of Brown County into three groups: 1) those which are quite commonplace and have an obvious origin, such as a family name; 2) those which are somewhat unusual in that the name is odd, although having a fairly obvious source; and 3) those names which are unique or about whose origin there appear to be differences of opinion.

We need not take up much space with the commonplace names. Those which I have collected are, for the most part, derived from the names of individuals or families. Helmsburg, according to Ed Snider, was named for an uncle of his who came from Ohio around 1830 and settled there. Eudora Kelly points out that Kelly Hill and Schooner Hill, west of Nashville, were also named after early families; much of the area of Kelly Hill is still owned by the Kelly Family. Miss Kelly noted, too, that Beck's Grove received its name from another early settler, the Elder David Beck. Hamblin Township, according to Squire Harry Kelp, was named for one Job Hamblin, a Revolutionary War soldier who settled there. And Mrs. Amanda Wilson noted that Story, or Storyville, was named for Dr. Story, who taught her father-in-law the medical profession.

There are a couple of non-personal names that are perhaps worth noting. Nashville, the county seat, was named after Nashville, Tennessee, observed Frank Chitwood, who also pointed out that prior to about 1835 the name of the town was Jacksonburg. The change supposedly was necessitated by the establishment of a post office in the town—the state already had one Jacksonburg post office. According to Mr. Chitwood, the present town of Unionville suffered the same experience. Originally called Fleenersburg, after an early

family, the granting of a post office necessitated a change to prevent confusion with another Fleenersburg. Unionville was selected as the new name in honor of the Union Christian Church.

But let us turn now to a few of the somewhat more unusual place names in Brown County, those which comprise my second grouping. Most of these names appear to have generally accepted origins; it is the names themselves which strike me as being rather unusual. An interesting one is Scarcity Fat Ridge, south of Needmore. Ed Snider informed me that the area was so poverty stricken that the people there didn't see anything fat from one end of the year to the other—hence its name, Scarcity Fat. In contrast, Greasy Creek, according to Marion Raisbeck and Billy Watkins, received its name from the surplus lard and grease that the prosperous farmers dumped into its waters. However, Eudora Kelly provided another version, maintaining that the creek's greasiness came from the body oil of the many bears that used to swim and wallow in it. She also mentioned that some of the artists who later settled around Nashville tried unsuccessfully to change the stream's name to Pleasant Run, a good illustration of the staying power of many folk-derived names. Bear Wallow was so named, stated both Eudora Kelly and Billy Watkins, for a hollow, damp depression in the earth in which bears loved to wallow. Another interesting name is Milk Sick Bottoms, a section of bottom land on the Kelly Family farm. According to Miss Kelly, cattle put to grazing there years ago took sick from eating poisonous weeds, and as a result the section came to be known as Milk Sick Bottoms.

We come now to my third group of Brown County place names, those that are really unique or colorful. In most cases one can only speculate as to the origins of the names, and needless to say, rarely do any two people share exactly the same opinions concerning them.

Perhaps the most famous Brown County name is Gnaw Bone, a small town in the eastern part of the county. There are two basic theories concerning the origin of the name. It has been suggested that the name is a corruption of the French name Narbonne. However, this appears to be an educated guess, forwarded primarily by outsiders, who are perhaps suspicious of traditional explanations. In any event, I have yet to find a Brown Countian who subscribes to this theory. What might be called the "native theory" centers, in essence, around someone gnawing on a bone, but the circumstances surrounding the gnawing vary considerably. One might generalize them into three subtypes: 1) according to Billy Watkins and Harry Kelp, a traveler is directed to or comes upon a man or an animal gnawing

on a bone, and accordingly dubs the place Gnaw Bone; 2) a group of soldiers encamped there and a) were so short of food that they were reduced to gnawing on bones (Billy Watkins), or b) they were held up when decamping by one soldier who was gnawing on a tasty bone (Frank Chitwood). In the first instance the soldiers were identified as Civil War troops, but Frank Chitwood stated that they were a detachment of Harrison's troops, after the Battle of Tippecanoe. 3) other informants—Marion Raisbeck, Eudora Kelly, Louis Snyder—recounted a variety of incidents or situations, all concerned with residents of the locality gnawing on bones. Eudora Kelly also pointed out that a family named West once attempted to have the name of the town changed to West Point, but the people stuck with Gnaw Bone.

There is greater agreement about Pike's Peak, a small community near the southeastern corner of the county; the differences are only in a couple of the details. The basic story, as given by several informants, is that a person, or persons, going west traveled through this corner of Brown County. One or more of their wagons, which carried the legend "Pike's Peak or Bust," broke down (Eudora Kelly, Louis Snyder)—or else one or more members of the party decided they'd had enough traveling (Amanda Wilson). Because they had advertised their destination as Pike's Peak, they gave that name to the place where they settled.

Earlier I mentioned Bean Blossom, a little town a few miles above Nashville. Most people appear to feel that both the town and Bean Blossom Creek were named after a wild bean plant that grew along the creek (Ed Snider). However, Frank Chitwood told a more interesting version, which he learned years ago from a man named Carter, an old resident of the locality. The Indians that once lived in the area apparently were in the habit of stealing horses. Once a particularly large number were stolen from Bloomington, and General Tipton, in Columbus, was asked to apprehend the thieves. The troops caught up with the culprits, and in the ensuing fracas one of the Indians was drowned in a stream. His name was Bean Blossom, and the name thereafter was attached to the stream in which he drowned. The town was originally George Town—named after an early settler—but once again the establishment of a post office forced a change, and the name of the creek was adopted for the town.

Local poverty is traditionally the source of several Brown County place names. Needmore almost explains itself—Ed Snider, presently a resident of the town, stated simply that it needs more. In a more expanded statement of the same idea, Eudora Kelly remarked that

in its early days the town needed more people, more food, more wagons, more of everything, and so got its name. Frank Chitwood disagreed with this explanation. He noted that the town was founded by a group of settlers from Ohio who could not agree on a name for their new community. One day a traveler came through and asked the name of the town. A drunken man, not understanding him, and referring to his own desire for more liquor, answered him "need more." This caught the townspeople's fancy, and they called their settlement Needmore.

Ed Snider told about the settlement of Shake Rag in the following manner. Many years ago an old tramp, looking for a handout, came through the community. He was so rundown and ragged that he could barely hide his nakedness. Instead of giving him a handout, the residents ran him off. He said he would shake the dust of the place from under his feet, so he just shook his old rags and went off down the road. From then on the place came to be known as Shake Rag.

Another interesting name is Trevlac. Everyone I spoke to knew that it was Calvert spelled backwards, but not everyone knew why. Ed Snider and Frank Chitwood, both old railroad men, informed me that when the Illinois Central Railroad was put through the county, a station was constructed a short distance east of the Monroe County line. A man named Calvert owned most of the property in the area, and it was decided to name the stop after him. However, there already was a Calvert on the Illinois Central line; therefore, they did the next best thing and used his name spelled backward.

Stone Head is a small community near Pike's Peak, populated primarily by a family named Hendricks. Amanda Wilson informed me that the uncle of Dolly Hendricks used to carve large stone heads that were placed along the road as mileage markers. One of those stone heads still stands in the community, and from it the town received its name.

One final place name, and for this one we step slightly over the line into Bartholomew County, where we find the community of Stoney Lonesome. Marion Raisbeck stated that eight people settled in the locality about Civil War times. Since there were only eight of them and they lived along a very stony creek, they called the place Stoney Lonesome. Billy Watkins' explanation, given to him by an elderly man who lives in Stoney Lonesome, was that the name came from the hollow, lonesome sound that the steel wagon wheels made as they came up through the place.

This by no means exhausts Brown County place names—or even exhausts the supply of unique names. For instance, in the southwestern part of the county is the settlement of Youno. It's an intriguing name, and I've asked several people if they know its origin, but with no success thus far. I am sure, too, that there are many names I haven't heard about—not necessarily names of towns, but perhaps of natural locations that would be as interesting as Scarcity Fat Ridge, Greasy Creek, or Bear Wallow. In fact, I have recently heard of one—Starve Hollow—but I have yet to find someone who can give me an explanation of the name. I am certain that a thorough search would yield a rich store of highly colorful and unique traditional place names in Brown County, and for that matter, in the entire state of Indiana.

#### NOTES

The material that appears in this paper was collected as part of the Brown County Project, which involved several people from the Indiana University Folklore Department. The material from Louis Snyder was collected by Maurice Schmaier; that from Eudora Kelly, Billy Watkins, and Harry Kelp was collected by Donald M. Winkelman; and that from Amanda Wilson, Marion Raisbeck, Ed Snider, and Frank Chitwood was of my own collection.

<sup>1</sup> Paul G. Brewster, "A Glance At Some Indiana Place Names," *Hoosier Folklore Bulletin*, Vol. II (1943), p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

ROBERT W. MONTGOMERY  
*Cambridge City, Indiana*

### HOST STORIES FROM DECATUR COUNTY

DURING THE PAST FOUR years, I have collected a number of stories from my pupils at Sandcreek High School. The stories are given here just as they were turned in by the pupils, (except for occasional corrections of spelling). Two of the stories have, according to some of the residents of the community, a factual basis.

The house in Letts now occupied by Jess Picket was at one time reputed to be haunted. According to the story, a baby died in an upstairs room and after that, at certain times the ghost of the infant could be heard crawling around the floor and crying. This continued for a considerable period until an elderly lady, who was part Indian, came to live there. She decided one evening that it was time that "the ghost was laid." Accordingly, she lighted a candle and going to the foot of the stairs, read a passage from the Scriptures. The noises ceased and were never heard again.

My grandfather had two coon dogs that were never known to fight. One night he took his dogs and lantern and went hunting. When he failed to return, a search party was organized and found him dead at the foot of a cliff. The dogs were fighting and the lantern was going off and on. The old man's son took the lantern, but it would never work right after that. It is said that the ghost of my grandfather follows the lantern.

A man in the community went hunting, and after he failed to return, people started hunting him. His body was found, lying with his head at the base of one tree and his feet at another. A few years later the same varieties of trees were noticed growing at the head and foot of his grave.

A young couple were to be married, but shortly before the date set, the girl became ill and died. The night after the funeral, there was a sudden illness in the young man's family and he had to "ride for the doctor." As he approached the cemetery where his bride to be had been buried, a violent storm arose. He spurred up and arrived at the church just as the storm broke, and quickly ran inside. As he entered a vivid flash of lightning lighted the interior. Lying in the aisle was the girl who had been buried that afternoon. The horse was found the next day grazing in the churchyard. Three days later the young man was found wandering in a dazed condition, not able to tell what had happened. It was several weeks before he came to his senses" and gave a clear account of the occurence.<sup>1</sup>

An old road, traces of which can still be seen on our farm, went up to the Boicourt Mill across Sand Creek and ended near the present day iron bridge. This road was often used by people going to and from the mill. There began to be reports that when people going to the mill reached a certain point, a woman and daughter, both dressed in black, would appear from nowhere and wave the people back. Not many people believed the story until "Big Daddy" Mires swore that as he approached the mill one evening, the two women

had appeared and waved him back. On the basis of this report, the road was closed and never used again.<sup>2</sup>

Near the road leading to the Baptist Youth Camp was formerly a road that went down the hill, crossed Sand Creek, and went up the hill on the other side. People began saying that if a horseback rider used the road at certain times of the night, the saddle would slip sideways when he started up the hill. Because of this story the road fell into disuse and was finally abandoned.

The first road east of the center of population monument went past the home of Dr. Biddinger, a veterinarian, and up the hill. The story came to be told that whenever anyone rode up the hill at midnight, the saddle would slip under the horse's stomach. No one believed the story, but to test it, a physician with a good reputation was chosen to ride up the hill at midnight. He reported that his saddle did slip, and the road was closed the next day.<sup>3</sup>

At Harris City there is the grave of an old man and his prize bull. It is said that when the moon is full on Friday the Thirteenth, you can see the old man lead the bull around the barn.

A few miles from Harris City lived a man named Vantrees who had thirteen sets of twin daughters. Whenever there was a full moon on a Friday night, a bunch of Indians came and danced on his front porch. This made the old man angry and he finally told the Indians that such "shenanigans" had to be stopped. Following that, on the first Friday night that a full moon occurred, two screams were heard, and the next morning one of the sets of twins was found scalped. This continued until all of the daughters had been killed. When the old man died several years later, it was said that there were several odd people at his funeral.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The father of the girl who contributed this story stated that the people of the community at that time believed that grave robbers had been hired to dig up the corpse, and had finished their gruesome task just ahead of the storm, and that they had likewise taken refuge in the church, depositing the body in the aisle, just prior to the young man's entry.

<sup>2</sup> There was a competing mill in the vicinity and it is believed by many people that the wife and daughter of the miller hid in the bushes and stepped out in front of people to frighten them and discourage trading at the Boicourt Mill.

<sup>3</sup> The road referred to in both stories is the same.